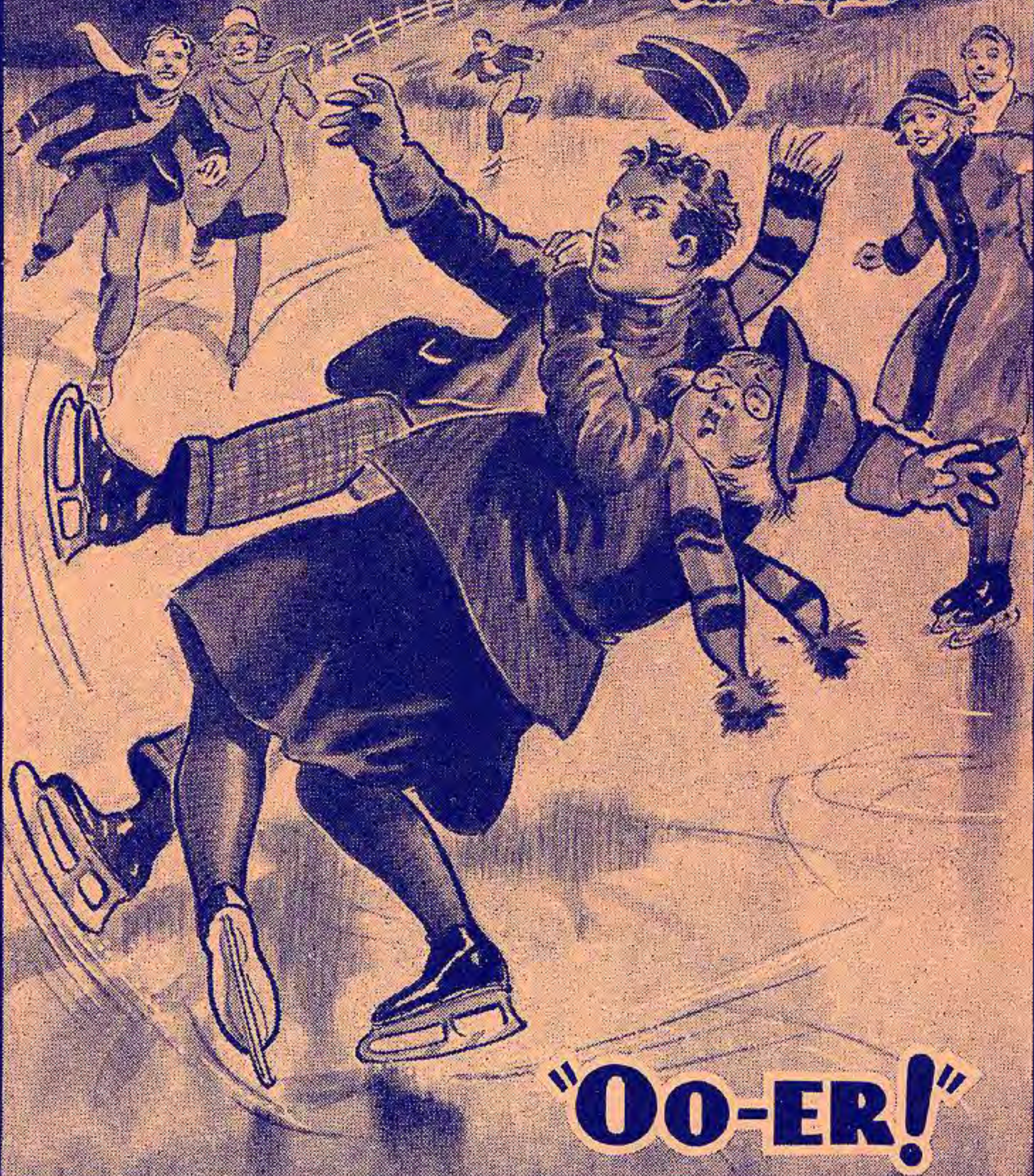


Uproariously Funny School Yarn Of Harry Wharton & Co. Inside.

The Magnet ^{2^D}

Billy Bunter's
Own Paper



"OO-ER!"



THIS WEEK BY
"MOSSOO"
Monsieur Charpentier.

MONSIEUR L'EDITEUR.—You ask me that I inscribe an article on my impressions of the English school. Bien, I do so! Your English boy, in general, I like him well. He is a drole—what-you-call, funny fellow. He must have the little joke, n'est-ce-pas? He pull me the leg very much. Voici, he drive me off one dot, he shake me loose in the cabeza, it is that I very almost go barmy. I shout him to shut up, I admonish him to have some attention, but very scarcely he take any notice.

Me, I do not cane les enfants. The cane—bah, it is horrible! Always it give much agony. But the good Monsieur Quelch make much use of it. Regard, then, what happens? He smack with a cane, and the class silence itself. Always les enfants are as good as some gold when he smack with the cane. Is this in reason? Ma foi, it appear that the English boy wishes the cane, or why does he not make himself quiet till he is smacked with it?

But he have the good heart, your English boy. In general, perhaps, he drive me to the baldness of head; but me, I like him. He is frank and open and over-the-board. (Probably m'sieur means "above-board."—Ed.) He make himself to laugh very often; he is young and happy and full of the joie de vivre—or cock-of-the-hoop, as your English word says. But parbleu—he have no sense! Il ne sait pas raison, je vous en assure. Myself, I can prove it. Regard his sports, his criquet and football.

CRIQUET and FOOTBALL

He play often the criquet match. He makes himself to appear in white trousers, he cover himself with gloves and padding, he stands before some wood-sticks in the ground. One throws him a ball. He pats it with a club. Once more it is thrown, and again he pats it back. The onwatchers smite their hands and tell him to "go out to it." He mark their words, and do not pat it back again. It clatters on the sticks behind him. A chef-du-jeu in a long white robe—M'sieu l'Umpire, is his name—says he must go out. Bon, that is good! The onwatchers shall be pleased? But, no, not so. They put themselves to mock about him. They have told him to go out and the pauvre enfant has done it, but now they make cries about him. They say he has the egg of a duck. He hangs him the head. It is perhaps not good to eat eggs. Me, I do not know. My heart bleed for his folly.

Another enfant take his place to pat the ball. He pat it straight into the hands of one who waits, a fieldsman. It is perhaps the fieldsman who must put the ball on the field. Bien, he does so! He put it immediately upon l'herbe—the grass. That is good! But, no! The onwatchers once more put themselves to mock. They call him a butterfinger. They entreat him to go home to madame his mother, they inform him that he is not able to catch cold. Always the onwatchers make joke. Is it, perhaps, a part of the game?

An enfant stands close up to the sticks. I ask myself of Wingate, who is also watching, "Is he also a fieldsman?" "Yes, m'sieu," he says. "He is a slip!" But regard, the ball come straight to him. The slip immediately slip over, he fall on the grass and avoids the ball. That must please the onwatchers? But again no. They entreat him to stand up. They ask if they

shall perhaps bring him out a featherbed. Always they have no sense. If a man do his job well, they mock him.

But if a man do wrong and become a traitor to his side, they smite the hands and shout "Well played!" Is it well played? Regard the wicketkeeper. His task is to keep the wicket—yes? He must defend the sticks from injury. But what arrives? He catch the ball in big gloves and throw it full at the sticks. They are uprooted, the balls fly. Ah, traitor, scelerat! He has damaged the wicket! Why, then, do the onwatchers shout "Well played!" Because they have no sense. Is it not so?

Criquet, he is a summer game. They now play Socker-football. But why Socker? It is not socks but stockings on their legs. It must to have short trousers and shirts of stripes. There is a gollie, two backs, three half-backs, and five frontwards. But these are nothing, they are not of the game, the onwatchers very scarcely notice them. They look all at one man, Monsieur l'Arbitre—what-you-call-him, reveree—who has a siffle. (Whistle!—Ed.)

Poor M. le Reveree! He is insane, one madman. The onwatchers know it, they taunt him with it. Ma foi, c'est incroyable—he is to be pitied, is it not? To go off upon the crumpet—that is terrible. To have the screw unfast in the cabeza—this is not fit to be mocked. Each time he blow the siffle the onwatchers make cries. They entreat him to swallow it. They address him sternly. The reveree points and says, "Fowl!" Fists are shaken and calls-of-the-cat assail him. What is this fowl? It is perhaps some relation of the duck-egg at criquet. It is defended to eat fowl or duck in sport, perhaps?—(By "defended" m'sieur means prohibited.—Ed.)

Some say, "It was a dirty fowl!" Others put themselves to booing and repique: "No, no, no! That chicken won't wash!" But, ma foi, a chicken not washed is a dirty fowl, n'est-ce-pas? One foots the ball, the reveree siffles and says it is off the side. But it is not off side. The ball is in the middle. The onwatchers again make cries. It is all a hotch of a potch to me. I can make nothing of it.

Who is it that play the Socker—the reveree or the ballfooters? No, I do not know. If no reveree arrive, the ballfooters shall play better, they cannot be stopped by the siffle. But if no ballfooters are there, M. le Reveree have all the time to amuse



the onwatchers with his siffle—they shall see him better and know what he does.

Voilà! The English have no sense! Is it not so?

VIVE LA FRANCE!

Always the French know better. M'sieur Prout contradict this emphatiquement. He talk much—mon dieu, how he talk! One time he take me to a shooting match with Monseigneur de Popper at Popper Court. There are some dogs. I make inquire of him: "Why, then, the dogs?" "They are to start the game, m'sieur!" Start the game! Good, it is well! I will show them that a French can shoot. I present the gun and fire. A dog roll over. He has kicked up the bucket. Me, I have started the game well—a dog at first fire.

But, sapristi! There is the hub-of-a-bub! Messieurs Prout and Popper foam at the mouth. It is that they are jealous. They do not desire me to beat them at the shooting-match. They request me to retire. M'sieur Prout explique—by "start the



The English boy at play

game" he meant to arouse the birds. The dogs are not some targets; it is the birds one makes dead.

Ah, no, no! It will nothing do! I am not deceived. They are jealous that a French has beat them. Vive la France!

BLOW IT!

Again, your English customs. Is it that they have sense? Regard, then! In winter you blow upon your hands, yes? Pourquoi? To make them warm. That goes well, it is O.K. Gosling, he have the cup of tea, he pour it into a saucer, he blow upon it—pouf, pouf! Does he then blow to make it warm? Nom d'un chien, no, no! He blow to make it cool! It is that the English blow-hot-and-cold, as your saying says. One blow to warm it, one blow to cool it—always no sense!

Again, Mister l'Editeur and Messieurs the Readers, do you not blow the candle to put it out? Of a verity. And a fire—you blow that also to put it out? Sapristi, no! You blow to catch him afire, to make him light! How have you sense?

But n'importe—no matter! England is tres agreeable. It is a good country. Vive l'Anglais!

Accept, messieurs my distinguished salutations,

HENRI CHARPENTIER.

M. HENRI CHARPENTIER, the French Master.

The French Master at Greyfriars is the shortest of the staff, but makes up for it by being rather wide. He is a kindly and good-tempered little man, and the butt of all the japers. "Mossoo," or "Froggy," as he is called, dislikes canings and punishment, and as a consequence he is the victim of innumerable rags. Frogs in his desk, ink on his chair, gum in his inkwell, booby-traps over his door—he is used to them all. None the less, most fellows like him. He comes from a village in the South of France, where a horde of poor relations sponge on Oncle Henri, and often write for money. As a result, Mossoo is usually hard up, and sometimes a little shabby, but his manners are polished and polite at all times. In this cartoon, Skinner has shown him bowing with true Gallie courtesy to a casual frog, but whether he is doing this before collecting the frog for lunch, Skinner only knows!

(Cartoon by HAROLD SKINNER.)

MAKING HACKER HAPPY! Horace Hacker, master of the Shell, and Harry Wharton & Co., of the Remove, have never been the best of friends. Little wonder then that when the "Acid Drop" accuses the Famous Five of indulging in shady practices, they get up to some playful pranks for his special benefit!

The HOAXING of HACKER!



By
FRANK RICHARDS

"Lost something?" asked Harry Wharton, as Bob Cherry began searching through his pockets. "I've left my fags in the study!" answered Bob. Mr. Hacker gave a start as he heard the words.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Misjudged!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. were not to blame.

They really had nothing to do with it.

They were, in fact, as innocent as the Babes in the Wood.

The Famous Five of the Greyfriars Remove did not even know what Hobson of the Shell was up to till Mr. Hacker happened!

In break, that cold and frosty morning, they spotted Hobby from a distance, and were surprised and interested—that was all.

It was a fearfully cold morning. There was snow in the old quad of Greyfriars School; snow gleaming on the old red roofs, and glistening on the leafless branches of the ancient elms.

Harry Wharton & Co. were taking a little trot, partly for exercise, partly to keep themselves warm, when they came along by the gate of the Head's garden, and spotted Hobson.

Hobson, apparently, was making a slide.

Slides in the quad were strictly forbidden. Thoughtless fellows sometimes made them, all the same. But it was rather unusual for a fellow to be sliding by himself, all on his lonely own!

That was what Hobby was doing.

His slide extended from the Head's gate, to a little distance therefrom, and Hobby was going to and fro on it, wearing it smoother and smoother.

He seemed very intent on his task, and did not even look round when the

Remove fellows appeared in the offing. They stopped, and stared at him.

"The ass!" said Harry Wharton. "What has he picked that spot for?"

"Suppose the Head came out at that gate!" said Frank Nugent.

Bob Cherry whistled. "He would step on that slide before he saw it," he said, "and then——"

"Then——" said Johnny Bull. "Whizz! Bump! And a flogging for that fathead!"

"The terrific ass!" said Hurree

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**Entertaining 35,000-word  
School Story of HARRY  
WHARTON & CO., the Cheery  
Chums of GREYFRIARS.**

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Jamset Ram Singh. "Is he off his ridiculous rocker?"

It was really surprising, and a little alarming! Of all spots within the walls of Greyfriars School, that was the very last spot that any sensible fellow would have selected for making a slide. The mere possibility of the headmaster stepping on it was unnerving to think of.

Suddenly Hobson of the Shell ceased his extraordinary task. Suddenly, swiftly, he bolted from the spot, cutting along the wall, and vanished round the nearest corner. He was gone like a

spectre at cock-crow, leaving the astonished juniors gazing.

It was then that Hacker happened.

A bony figure appeared within the gate; a sharp-featured and far from amiable face looked over it.

Mr. Hacker, master of the Shell, called the "Acid Drop" in his Form, was coming out of the Head's garden!

Then the Remove fellows understood.

Hobby, of course, must have known that his beak had gone to walk in the Head's garden in break. He had been preparing a little surprise for the Acid Drop when he came out! No doubt there had been trouble in the Shell Form Room that morning! There often was! Possibly Hobby had had six. Hacker was a firm believer in the liberal use of the cane. It was said in the Shell that Hacker actually liked to hear the swish of the cane. His Form did not like it at all. Tastes differed!

"Oh!" gasped Bob, as the master of the Shell dawned on the vision of the Famous Five. "The Acid Drop! That's why——"

Then it happened.

There was nothing that the juniors could do—even if they wanted to! It happened too suddenly. There was not even time to shout a warning, if it had occurred to them to do so. Hacker opened the gate and stepped out even as they saw him!

He stepped on the slide. Then he whizzed!

Hacker was probably the most surprised man in the county of Kent
THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1617.

at that moment. He did not know what was happening. It seemed to him that the solid globe was suddenly flying away from under his feet.

His feet shot along the slide. The rest of Hacker, naturally, went after his feet. He flew!

He had a book under one arm. It spun in the air on one side of him, while his mortar-board spun off on the other. His master's gown, filled by the wind like a sail as he flew, ruffled up round his neck. His aspect was startling as he shot along the slide, his arms waving wildly.

Whizz! The whizzability, so to speak, was good! Hacker whizzed along the slide like an arrow from a bow.

"Ooooooogh!" A prolonged gasp floated from him. "Ooooooogh!"

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Oh my hat!" stuttered Wharton.

"That mad ass, Hobby—"

"Oh crikey!"

Bump!

Half-way along the slide Mr. Hacker's feet got ahead of him; and the rest of him, being left without any visible means of support, sat down.

He sat on the slide. But his own momentum carried him onward! Sitting, he shot along.

His mouth was wide open, gasping. His eyes seemed to be popping from his head. His gown was tangled round his neck. His frantic arms sawed the air. To the onlookers there was something comic in all this, though not, of course, to Hacker.

The Famous Five burst into a sudden roar.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bump again!

Hacker's wild career came to a sudden stop, in a pile of snow at the end of the slide. He bumped into it, rolled in it, and sprawled in it. He gasped and gurgled as he sprawled.

He sat up dizzily, spluttering for breath, smothered with snow. Amazement in his face gave place to fury.

"Better lend a hand!" gasped Harry Wharton.

Suppressing their merriment, the Famous Five rushed to render first-aid. But as they approached at a run, Mr. Hacker greeted them with a deadly glare.

"You young rascals!" he thundered.

"Wha-a-t?"

"How dare you?" shrieked Mr. Hacker. He struggled to his feet. "I repeat, how dare you! This outrage will—"

"We—we—we—" stuttered Bob.

"You rascals—young ruffians—hooligans!" booted Mr. Hacker. "You have dared—you have dared to play this trick—this rascally trick! Upon my word—I—I—I—"

Words failed the Acid Drop. He proceeded to action.

Bob Cherry was nearest—and Bob staggered back suddenly, with a loud howl, from a tremendous smack on his ear!

"Yaroooo!" roared Bob.

"Look here, sir—" gasped Harry Wharton. He broke off, jumping back just in time to dodge the next smack.

"We never—" gasped Nugent.

Evidently Hacker supposed that the chums of the Remove had laid that little trap for him! They were on the spot! Nobody else was! He did not stop to inquire. He was too angry for that! He smacked right and left at unoffending heads.

"Look here—" roared Johnny Bull. Smack!

"Oh my hat!"

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"Hook it!"

The Famous Five could not explain how innocent they were, with Hacker smacking their heads all the time. There was only one thing to do—to hook it; and they hooked it promptly, leaving Hacker spluttering with fury as they went.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Not Gully!

"I SAY, you fellows—he, he, he!"

Billy Bunter seemed amused. The bell had rung for third school, and the Remove gathered at their Form-room door.

Billy Bunter was the last to arrive—as usual! His fat face was wreathed in grins as he arrived, and he emitted a series of cachinnations, like unto an alarm-clock badly in need of repair.

"He, he, he!" cachinnated Bunter. "I say you fellows, seen Hacker?"

"Hacker?" repeated Harry Wharton & Co with one voice. They had seen Hacker—seen too much of him, in fact.

"I say, somebody's been snowballing him, I think!" chuckled Bunter. "I've just seen him—smothered all over! He, he, he!"

"Snowballing Hacker!" exclaimed Vernon-Smith.

"Well, he looks like it!" grinned Bunter. "And you should see his face! Like a tiger!" Bunter chortled. "I say, you fellows, he's in a fearful rage! Worse than Quelch at his very worst! Quelch has a rotten temper, but—"

"Shut up, you ass!" breathed Peter Todd, as Mr. Quelch came whisking up the corridor.

Bunter blinked at him through his big spectacles.

"Shan't!" he retorted. "You know as well as I do that Quelch has a rotten temper, and—"

"Bunter!"

"Oh crikey!"

"What did you say, Bunter?" inquired Mr. Quelch in a voice like that of the great huge bear, his gimlet eyes glittering at the startled Owl of the Remove.

"Oh! Nothing, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I was only saying to Toddy, sir, how—how nice your temper is, sir—not like Hacker's—"

"Take a hundred lines, Bunter!"

"Oh crumbs!"

Mr. Quelch unlocked the Form-room door, and the Remove went in.

The Shell were still waiting for their Form-master. Hacker, it appeared, had not yet recovered from his wild adventures on the slide.

The Remove took their places, and Mr. Quelch had just got going on Roman history when the Form-room door flew open again.

The Remove master stared round in surprise.

All the Remove stared.

It was unusual—very unusual—for class to be interrupted. It was still more unusual for it to be interrupted by the Form-room door flying open with a bang!

"Mr. Hacker!" exclaimed the Remove master in shocked astonishment.

Mr. Hacker strode in.

There was still some snow clinging to Mr. Hacker here and there. His face had quite a deadly look. If he did not look precisely, as Bunter had stated, like a tiger, it was clear, at least, that he was in a state of towering wrath.

"Mr. Quelch, I have to report certain boys of your Form to you for an outrageous action—a most outrageous and ruffianly action!" gasped Mr. Hacker.

"Indeed, sir!" said Mr. Quelch

coldly. "After class, sir, would be a more appropriate time—"

"I do not care to wait till after class, sir, when I have been assaulted by a mob of young ruffians!" spluttered Mr. Hacker.

"Mr. Hacker!"

"I will name the boys, sir—Wharton, Nugent, Cherry, Bull, and the Indian boy!" booted Mr. Hacker.

Mr. Quelch compressed his lips. He did not like complaints about his boys, and he did not like Hacker's manner. However, he turned to his class.

"The boys named will stand out before the Form!" he rapped.

The Famous Five, exchanging glances, stepped out before the Form. They realised that Hacker was still in his error, but they were not much alarmed. Their absolute innocence in the matter was a sure shield!

"Now will you kindly state what these boys have done, Mr. Hacker?" asked the Remove master icily.

"Those young hooligans—"

"I will listen to no such expressions, sir!" barked Mr. Quelch. "If you have anything to report to me—"

"I have to report to you, sir, what amounts to an assault on a member of Dr. Locke's staff!" booted Mr. Hacker.

"These boys had the impudence—the audacity—the ruffianism—to make a slide outside the gate of the Head's garden, and I stepped on it, sir, in coming out! I fell, sir! I am shaken, and indeed bruised! It was a great shock to me. The headmaster himself might have fallen into the same trap had he come out of the garden instead of myself. I caught them, sir, fairly in the act—"

"Is it possible?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"I fell, sir—I was shaken and—and bruised—smothered with snow—I demand the most exemplary punishment—"

"The most exemplary punishment shall certainly be administered if these boys have done what you describe, Mr. Hacker! Wharton—"

"There is no 'if' in the matter, sir! I have told you what these boys have done—I caught them on the very spot, and—"

"I must hear what the boys have to say, Mr. Hacker. Wharton, you will answer me. What have you to say?"

"Only that we never made the slide, sir," answered Harry meekly. "It was there when we came along, and when Mr. Hacker went over we ran up to help him. That is all, sir."

"Oh!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "You hear this, Mr. Hacker?"

"I hear it, sir," said the Acid Drop bitterly, "and I am amazed—astounded—to hear any boy speak with such reckless untruthfulness."

Harry Wharton's eyes flashed.

"My Form-master can take my word, Mr. Hacker!" he exclaimed. "You have no right to say anything of the sort."

"Silence, please!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch hastily. "Do you all say the same, my boys?"

"Yes, sir!" answered Bob Cherry, Johnny Bull, and Frank Nugent.

"The sameness is terrific!" declared Hurree Janset Ram Singh. "We were preposterously startled to see the esteemed Hacker go whizzing, sir."

"We ran up to give him a hand!" exclaimed Frank Nugent indignantly. "We hadn't been near the slide till then."

Mr. Quelch pursed his lips.

"You did not actually see these boys making the slide, Mr. Hacker?" he asked.



Whizz ! It seemed to Hacker as if the solid globe were suddenly flying from under his feet as he shot along the slide. His gown, filled by the wind like a sail as he flew, ruffled up round his neck. "Ooooooogh !" A prolonged gasp floated from him. "Ooooooch !"

"Is it likely, sir, that they would allow me to witness their rascality?" hooted Mr. Hacker. "They were standing looking on! No one else was there, or even in sight! They were there, waiting for me to step out of the Head's garden and fall into their dastardly trap."

"Were you boys aware that Mr. Hacker was in the Head's garden?"

"No, sir. Not till we saw him come out."

"I am required in my Form-room, sir!" said Mr. Hacker. "I desire to see these young rascals punished without further loss of time."

Quelch's gimlet eyes glinted. The Acid Drop had a dictatorial tone, and Quelch was about the last man on the staff to be dictated to in his own Form-room.

"No punishment will be administered here, Mr. Hacker," he said tartly. "The boys' statement is perfectly clear. They happened to be near the spot—as any boys in the school might have happened to be. I could not believe, without the clearest evidence, that they did so thoughtless and foolish a thing. And you offer me no evidence whatever."

"They were there——"

"I might have been passing the spot myself, sir, at the time! Anyone might have done so. There is no reason whatever to suppose that these boys had anything whatever to do with the matter. Indeed, had they been concerned in it, it is most improbable that they would have remained on the spot for you to identify them!"

Mr. Hacker breathed hard through his sharp nose.

"Do you refuse to punish these boys on my plain statement, Mr. Quelch?" he demanded.

"I certainly refuse to punish any boy

in my Form when he is obviously guiltless of wrongdoing!" snapped Mr. Quelch.

"Enough, sir!" gasped Hacker, almost choking. "I shall consider whether to place the matter before the headmaster."

"You may do precisely as you please, Mr. Hacker. At the moment, however, I must remind you that you are interrupting class."

The Acid Drop gave Quelch a look, and gave the Famous Five another. Then he strode out of the Form-room, and the door closed after him with a bang!

"You boys may go back to your places," said Mr. Quelch.

The Famous Five returned to their places.

Billy Bunter gave them a fat grin and a stage-whisper as they went:

"I say, you fellows, you're in luck! Fancy getting by with it like that!"

Unfortunately for the fat Owl, Mr. Quelch's ears were as sharp as his gimlet eyes. Those gimlet eyes fixed on the grinning Owl.

"Bunter!" boomed Quelch.

"Oh! I wasn't speaking, sir——"

"Take another hundred lines, Bunter."

"Oh, really, sir——"

"Another word, Bunter, and I shall cane you."

And from William George Bunter there did not come another word.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Not For Bunter !

JAMES HOBSON, the captain of the Shell, looked into Study No. 1 in the Remove after class, with a cheery grin on his rugged features.

Five juniors were in that study, and they were standing round the table, regarding a cake that lay thereon with admiring eyes.

"Some cake!" Bob Cherry was remarking.

It was indeed "some" cake! It was a big cake, a luscious cake, a fragrant cake; such a cake as might have made any schoolboy's mouth water.

It had arrived from Wharton Lodge that day for the captain of the Remove, made by his Aunt Amy's own fair hands, and dispatched to Greyfriars for the delectation of her dear nephew and his friends. And their expressions, as they gazed at it when it was unpacked, showed plenty of appreciation.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Has Bunter nosed this cake out already?" exclaimed Bob, as there was a footstep in the doorway.

The Famous Five glanced round. But it was not Bunter; it was James Hobson of the Shell. He came in grinning.

"Hobby!" said Harry Wharton. "You fathead, Hobby! You nearly landed us in a fearful row this morning!"

"That's what I came to speak about," answered Hobby. "I've heard that the Acid Drop got after you for that slide."

"Like a jolly old Red Indian!" said Bob. "I believe he still thinks we did it. He never saw you, though we jolly well did."

"Well, I wasn't going to let him see me, of course," grinned Hobby. "But I saw him all right, from the corner. I say, he was worth seeing, wasn't he? Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, quite!" said Harry Wharton, laughing.

"I never knew he'd fancy you fellows did it, of course," went on Hobby. "I'm jolly glad you never mentioned me."

"I've heard that he came to your Form-room."

"Queleh put the stopper on him all right," said Bob. "But we shouldn't have mentioned you, anyway, fathead!"

"Life wouldn't be worth living in the Shell if Hacker knew," said Hobson, with a shiver. "By gum! He asked for it, you know. I had six in second school because I dropped my desk-lid—an accident, of course."

"Accidents will happen!" grinned Bob. "We often have accidents like that in the French class; but we never try it on with Queleh."

"But it really was an accident," said Hobson. "The beastly thing slipped from my hand, and bang it went!"

The Famous Five grinned. They had no doubt that it was so. Hobby was always having accidents. He could hardly go near a table without knocking something off it, and if he leaned on a mantelpiece every article thereon was in peril.

"Of course, he couldn't take a chap's word," went on Hobby. "He thought it was a rag and gave me six. So I gave him the slide back again. But I say, thanks awfully for keeping it dark! I shouldn't have much skin left if Hacker knew. Look here, we've got rather a spread in my study. I came to ask you fellows."

Evidently Hobby was grateful.

"Only I see you've got a whacking cake," he added. "We've got rather a spread, but nothing so good as that."

"That's all right," said Harry. "We'll come—and bring the cake."

"Good egg!" said Hobby heartily. "Come on, then!"

"I say, you fellows—"

A fat squeak came from the passage.

"I knew Bunter would nose that cake out!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry!" Billy Bunter cast a longing blink at that scrumptious cake. "I say, I never knew you had a cake. How should I know? Think I saw it in the house-dame's room before Wharton got it? I haven't been near the room."

Bunter rolled into the study.

"I say, you fellows, I never came because of that cake. I never knew you had a cake. But I'll tea in this study, if you don't mind. Toddy's gone out to tea, and you know Toddy. When he teas out he doesn't care a rap whether there's anything in Study No. 7. Selfish, you know. You fellows mind if I tea here?"

The Famous Five grinned cheerily. Having already arranged to tea in Hobby's study and take the cake with them, they really did not mind if Bunter tea'd in Study No. 1 in the Remove. They did not mind at all!

"Not at all!" answered Harry Wharton. "Tea here if you like, old fat man!"

"Welcome as the flowers in May!" declared Frank Nugent.

Billy Bunter beamed.

Often and often did he drop into a Remove study to tea, especially that study; but seldom, very seldom, did he receive so hearty a welcome.

"Well, I'll stay," he said. "Smithy's given me a hint to drop in at Study No. 4, but I don't care much for Smithy's company. Mauly wants me, too, I fancy; but I'm going to give Mauly a miss. I say, is that Shell chap stopping here to tea?"

Bunter blinked rather inimically at James Hobson. It was a big cake, but every extra guest in the study made a difference.

"Oh, no!" said Harry, while Hobson

grinned. "Hobby's just going back to his own study."

"Oh, good!" said Bunter. "Of course I don't mind if you ask a chap to tea, Wharton—"

"Not really?" asked Harry. "You're too good!"

"Well, after all, it's your cake," said Bunter generously. "Still, a fellow likes enough to go round. That's a pretty decent cake, old chap! Not like the cakes I get from Bunter Court, of course—"

"Not in the least," agreed Wharton. "This is a real cake!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Wharton! Well, if you're going, Hobson, shut the door after you, will you? I say, where's the knife?" Billy Bunter blinked round through his big spectacles, in search of a knife to cut the cake.

Harry Wharton picked up the cake in its cardboard box and put it under his arm. Hobson, chuckling, stepped into the passage. The Famous Five, smiling, followed him out.

Billy Bunter extracted the bread-knife from the study cupboard and turned with it in his fat hand. He jumped at the sight of the juniors—and the cake—disappearing through the doorway.

"I say, you fellows," he howled, "wharrer you up to? Where are you taking that cake?"

Harry Wharton glanced back.

"To Hobby's study," he answered.

"What the thump are you taking it to Hobby's study for?" gasped Bunter.

"We're going to tea with Hobby," explained Wharton.

"Why, you—you—you silly idiot!" howled Bunter. "You said I could tea here!"

"So you can."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Nobody's stopping you, old fat frog!" said Bob Cherry. "Tea here all you like. Good-bye!"

"Beast!" roared Bunter.

The Famous Five—with the cake—followed Hobson down the passage to the landing.

Billy Bunter blinked after them with a devastating blink. He understood rather better now that hearty welcome to Study No. 1.

"I say, you fellows!" Bunter shot out of the study. "I say, if you're going to tea in the Shell, I don't mind; I'll come."

"Hobby hasn't asked you!" grinned Bob.

"And Hobby isn't going to!" said Hobson. "A fellow likes enough to go round, Bunter. I think I heard you say so."

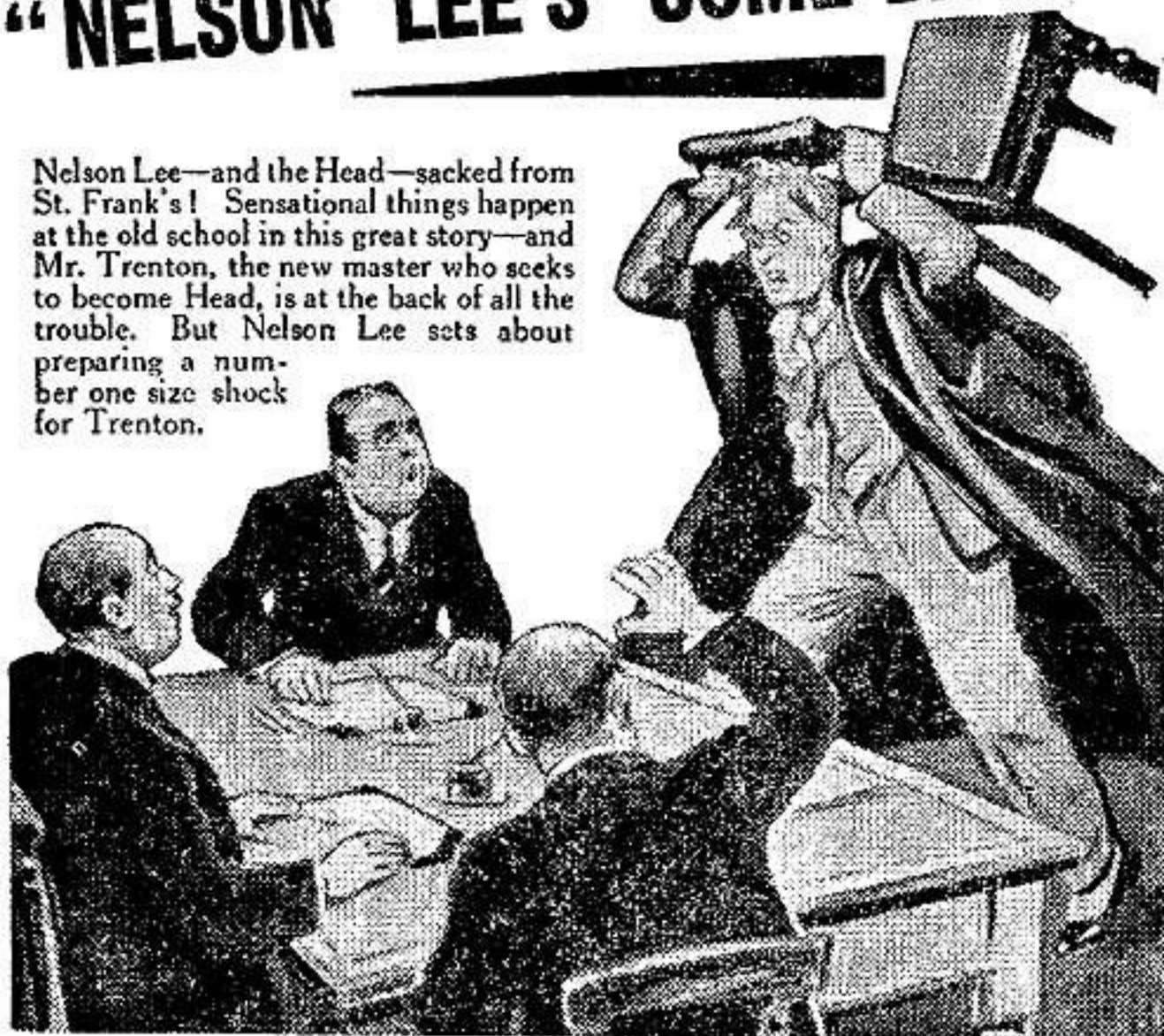
"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Hobson and the Famous Five and the cake, all disappeared together from Billy Bunter's gaze.

NELSON LEE—AND ST. FRANK'S HEADMASTER—SACKED!

"NELSON LEE'S COME-BACK!"

Nelson Lee—and the Head—sacked from St. Frank's! Sensational things happen at the old school in this great story—and Mr. Trenton, the new master who seeks to become Head, is at the back of all the trouble. But Nelson Lee sets about preparing a number one size shock for Trenton.



THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Hacker Comes Down Heavy!

MR. HACKER set his thin lips. Carr of the Shell, who happened to be looking out of his study, popped back. Shell fellows never liked to meet that bitter, searching eye.

Hacker was coming up the passage by the Shell studies, and the expression on his face was even more acidulated than usual.

He paused outside Hobson's study.

Hacker had a way of going along by the studies with a rather soft step—not exactly stealthy, for he was not conscious of doing anything mean, but certainly very quietly. Shell fellows could

never be quite sure whether the Acid Drop was in the offing, or not.

Horace Hacker was not a bad-hearted man, by any means. He was, according to his lights, a dutiful man. But doubt and distrust seemed to be parts of his nature. He did not trust boys, and did not, in fact, trust anybody, and he was rather proud of it than otherwise.

Mr. Capper, the master of the Fourth, could have his leg pulled to almost any extent by his boys. Hacker felt a deep contempt for Capper. Nobody, he flattered himself, could pull his leg. But Hacker probably made more mistakes from distrust than Capper ever made from trustfulness.

For instance, he was now feeling bitterly sore and bitterly indignant over that trick with the slide. He had not the slightest doubt that the young rascals in Quelch's Form had done it.

Had he believed Harry Wharton & Co., he might have sorted out the real culprit. He might have remembered that six he had given Hobby in second school, and guessed that it was the cause of the effect. But he did not believe Harry Wharton & Co. He was, he thought, a good deal too sagacious to be taken in by those young rascals!

They could delude their own Form-master; they could not delude Hacker. So his belief remained unchanged, and the fellow who had trapped him on that slide remained safe from discovery.

Hacker was thinking of those Remove boys as he came into the Shell passage. As their Form-master refused to punish them, he was powerless to give them what they deserved. He reflected bitterly that Dr. Locke was most likely to uphold Quelch in dealing with the Remove; so it was not much use laying his grievances before his chief. And then, to his surprise, he heard the voices of the very fellows he was thinking of—in Hobson's study.

His lips set hard and tight.

It was not usual for fellows to tea with fellows in another Form. Still, there was no law against it, and it sometimes happened. The mere fact that those young rascals were at tea in Hobson's study was not sufficient grounds for interference by Hacker—interfering as he was.

But there was some noise! There was not a lot—but there was some! Eight fellows packed in a junior study, most of them talking, were not likely to be as quiet as mice.

Hacker did not exactly grope round for an excuse for interfering. He simply decided on the spot that there was too much noise, and that he certainly would not have Shell studies turned into a bear-garden by noisy boys belonging to Quelch's Form. It was a Form-master's duty to maintain something like order in the studies, and Hacker was going to do his duty.

He threw open that study door.

Bob Cherry was making a remark as he did so—rather an unfortunate remark, in the circumstances.

"Did he whizz?" Bob was saying.

"The whizzfulness was terrific!" chuckled Hurree Singh.

"Oh!" came a general gasp, as the door flew wide.

Eight fellows jumped to their feet; the Famous Five of the Remove, and Hobson, Stewart, and Hoskins of the Shell. They all stared at Hacker. They wondered whether he had caught Bob's remark, and guessed to what it referred. They need not have wondered. He had.

"Less noise here!" rapped Mr. Hacker.

"Oh! Yes, sir!" gasped Hobson.

"So you were boasting of your disrespectful trick at the Head's gate this

morning, Cherry!" said Mr. Hacker bitterly.

"Oh! No, sir! We never had anything to do with it—"

"I am hardly likely to believe that, Cherry, after what I have just heard you say!"

Bob made no answer to that. He could not point out to a Form-master that he ought not to have heard what a fellow was saying to other fellows in a junior study.

"I am surprised, Hobson, that a boy in my Form should listen to such boasting on such a subject."

"Oh, sir!" Hobby's face was scarlet. As the actual fellow who had caught Hacker tripping on that slide, it was awkward for Hobby. "I—I—I'm sure that Cherry had nothing to do with it, sir—"

"Do not be impertinent, Hobson."

"Oh! Very well, sir."

Mr. Hacker's glance fixed on the tea-table. The cake was prominent to the view. He gazed at that cake.

There had been many other items in the spread in Hobby's study. Those items had now mostly been disposed of. The scrumptious cake was reserved to the last, to crown the feast. Harry Wharton had been about to cut it, when Hacker barged in. Now he was waiting for Hacker to go.

Hacker did not go. This was his chance.

Certainly, it was an uncommonly big cake, and, evidently, there had been other things for tea. Hacker was deeply incensed with the Famous Five, and annoyed with Hobby & Co. for being on such friendly terms with fellows who had, as he believed, tripped him on that slide. This was a chance of causing discomfort all round—which was Mr. Hacker's unhappy idea of exercising just authority.

"I shall not allow this!" said the Acid Drop, in his sharpest tones. "Boys are allowed to take tea in the studies, and to make reasonable additions to the school fare. That I have always permitted. But I will not permit greedy orgies in the studies of my Form. No doubt such things are allowed in the Remove—they are not allowed in the Shell."

Dead silence.

"Gluttony," continued Mr. Hacker, "is disgusting! You boys have obviously eaten enough, if not too much, already. Yet I find you about to devour that enormous cake. I shall allow nothing of the kind."

Mr. Hacker stretched out a bony hand to the cake.

"This cake," he said, very distinctly, "will be confiscated. You will take that as a warning, Hobson."

Eight fellows stared, or rather, glared. They could hardly believe their eyes, as Hacker snaffled the cake.

"Tain't our cake, sir!" gasped Hobson.

"What?"

"It's Wharton's—"

"Nonsense!"

"It is my cake, sir!" said Harry Wharton quietly, and as respectfully as he could. "It was sent me by my aunt to-day."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Hacker bitterly. "If that statement is correct, Wharton, you will understand, very plainly, that I decline to allow you, or any other Lower Fourth boy, to hold your revolting orgies in a Shell study. I have said that this cake is confiscated. If it is your property, you have only yourself to blame for having brought it here."

Under eight pairs of staring eyes, Mr. Hacker walked out of the study with the cake. The juniors watched him go

—speechless! They looked at one another—silent, but with eloquent looks.

"Sorry, you chaps—" stammered Hobby, his face crimson.

"Not your fault, old man!" said Harry.

"By gum," said Bob Cherry, with a deep breath, "if that sweep was our beak, we'd—we'd—we'd—"

"You'd stand him, same as we do!" said Stewart.

Bob stared at him, and then grinned.

"Well, I suppose we should!" he admitted. "But he wants some standing! The sw—"

"Anyhow, I got him on that slide!" said Hobby. "That's one comfort. But he's got the cake! Blow him! He's snaffled the cake!"

That luscious, scrumptious cake was gone from the tea-party's gaze like a beautiful dream. It was quite a sad ending to the tea-party in Hobby's study.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

A Narrow Escape!

BILLY BUNTER blinked from the window on the Remove landing, and at the same time listened with both his fat ears.

Bunter was equally interested in what he saw in the quad below, and in what he could hear from the landing.

Below, he had a view of a bony figure, in hat and overcoat, going down to the gates in the falling dusk. It was Mr. Hacker, and, obviously, he was going out.

The fat Owl of the Remove, as a rule, was quite uninterested in Hacker and his movements. On the present occasion, however, Hacker's departure was of the deepest interest to him; in view of what he could hear.

The Famous Five were on the landing, telling other Remove fellows what had happened in Hobby's study. They had come back from Hobby's study in a state of wrath and indignation.

"Wharton's cake, you know!" said Bob Cherry. "Not a Shell man's at all—Wharton's! And that swab has confiscated it!"

"Cheeky cad!" said the Bounder.

"Go to Quelch!" said Hazeldene. "Quelch has got his back up already, and he might make Hacker cough up the cake."

"Well, it was in a Shell study," said Harry. "Hacker is monarch of all he surveys in the Shell. He's within his rights, more or less."

"Quelch couldn't do anything," said Lord Mauleverer, shaking his head. "He has to give Hacker his head, in his own jolly old territory."

"I'd go to Quelch, all the same!" said Skinner. "Rather a lark to see him on the warpath with Hacker."

"Oh, rot!" said Bob. "But I've a jolly good mind to bag that cake back—it's in Hacker's study now. But—"

"The rowfulness would be too terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"He would guess at once that we had it!" said Harry. "Nothing doing, old chap; but we'll jolly well make Hacker sit up, somehow."

Billy Bunter grinned from the window.

Hacker had gone out! The confiscated cake was in Hacker's study! No doubt he was going to send it to the house-dame, sooner or later. But if he had not done so yet, it was still in his study, and if it was—

Leaving the Removites in excited and

wrathful discussion on the landing, the fat Owl rolled away downstairs.

The Famous Five did not know that Hacker had gone out. They might have been tempted to recapture that cake, had they known. But Bunter knew—having watched the Acid Drop from the window.

If Hacker, when he came in, missed that cake, he was fairly certain to suspect the owners thereof of having recaptured it. He was not likely to suspect Billy Bunter; or to think of him at all!

The fat Owl arrived at the corner of Masters' Passage and blinked along the studies there. He was safe from Hacker; but he did not want any other master's eye to fall on him, in that quarter.

But the coast was clear. Bunter rolled along to Hacker's study, and, like the Bavarian stream in the poem, he rolled rapidly! He whipped into Hacker's study and shut the door.

It was dim in the study, and Bunter did not venture to switch on the light. But he could see a large object on the study table, among the books and papers there. A fragrant scent from it reached his fat little nose.

There lay the cake!

Hacker had not yet sent it to the house-dame. Having to go out just then, no doubt he had left it till his return. It was hardly likely to occur to him that any fellow would pay a surreptitious visit to his study and snaffle that cake. Probably he had, for the time, forgotten it.

Billy Bunter fairly gloated over that cake. It was large; it was luscious; it was scrumptious; there was actually more of it than even Bunter could have disposed of at one sitting, at least, without unusual efforts. This was something like!

Bunter stayed only to break off a large rich chunk and stuff the same into his capacious moun, then he wedged the cake under his fat arm and turned to the door.

He opened that door an inch and listened to make sure that the coast was still clear before he emerged from the study.

The next moment he had cause to be glad that he had been so cautious. A voice floated to his ears—the squeaky voice of Monsieur Charpentier, the French master. Mossuo was in the passage!

"C'est vous, mon cher! But I zink zat I see you go out."

"Oh crumbs!" breathed Bunter.

Mossuo was speaking in the passage to another beak—someone whom he had thought had gone out. Bunter waited impatiently for the beasts to go; then, as another voice—a thin, acid voice—answered the French master, the fat Owl felt his flesh fairly creep.

"It is snowing again," came Mr. Hacker's voice. "The weather is altogether too bad."

"Mais si! It is verree bad vezzers!" agreed Monsieur Charpentier. "Zo vezzers is verree cold and verree vet! Altogether, it is verree mauvais vezzers."

Bunter stood petrified.

It had seemed so safe. From the landing window he had watched Hacker go. He had never dreamed that the unspeakable beast would turn back because of the weather. But the beast had—and now, obviously, he was coming to his study.

He was not only coming—he had come! His footsteps came along to the door as Bunter stood transfixed.

Never had the grub-raider of Grey-

friars been so caught and cornered. A second more and the door would open, revealing him in the study with the cake under his fat arm.

It opened. By instinct, for he had no time to think, Billy Bunter backed behind it as it opened.

The door was flung wide, and Hacker stepped in and switched on the light.

Behind the door, Bunter trembled from head to foot.

He was hidden for the moment by the door; but if Hacker was staying in the study he would close the door, and then—

In sheer horror Bunter waited for Hacker to throw the door shut and reveal him. But Hacker did not touch the door; something else had caught his attention and riveted it.

"Upon my word!" Bunter heard him bark. "Is it possible? Gone!"

Bunter wondered for a moment what that meant; then he guessed. Hacker, the moment he entered the study and turned on the light, saw that the confiscated cake was no longer on the table.

"Gone!" repeated Mr. Hacker. His acid voice was shrill with anger. "Is it possible? Such impudence! Such audacity! Gone! The cake has been taken—removed from my study! Upon my word! I will not tolerate this!"

Hacker was fairly hooting.

"If Quelch fancies for one moment that I will tolerate this he is very much mistaken! I will not endure this insolence from Remove boys! If Wharton is not immediately called to account for this I will place the matter before Dr. Locke! Upon my word!"

Bunter made no sound.

Mr. Hacker turned from the table and jerked back to the door.

Bunter's fat heart almost died within him.

But Hacker passed the open door, striding out into the passage. His hurried footsteps rang down the passage as he strode away towards Mr. Quelch's study.

"Oh erikey!" breathed Bunter.

Hacker was gone. Not for a moment, evidently, had it occurred to him that the cake-raider was still in the study, hidden behind the wide-open door.

Bunter heard a loud rap on a door down the passage; he heard that door open. Hacker had gone in to Quelch.

This was Bunter's chance.

He whipped round the door and blinked out into the passage. It was empty. Hacker was with Quelch; Mossuo was gone; the coast for the moment was clear. The fat Owl whipped out of the study and scudded up the passage. He was round the corner almost in a twinkling.

Round that corner was the French master's class-room—now, of course, unoccupied. Bunter shot into that class-room and shut the door after him; he stood panting.

He had had a narrow escape—one of his very narrowest! But he had escaped. And he had the cake! It was dark and gloomy in that class-room, and rather cold, but Bunter did not heed these trifles. He sat down at a desk, with the cake before him, and started!

He did not bother about cutting it. It was quicker to break lumps off with his fat paws.

While Hacker's acid voice shrilled in Quelch's study there was another sound in that deserted class-room—a sound of guzzling and gobbling. Billy Bunter forgot Hacker—he forgot time and space—he gobbled and gobbled and gobbled!

Gobble! Gobble! Gobble!

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Called On The Carpet!

"WHARTON!"

"Here, Wingate!"

"Nugent!"

"Here!"

"Bull! Cherry! Hurree Singh!"

"Here!"

Wingate of the Sixth recited that list of names at the doorway of the Rag, where most of the Remove had gathered after tea.

The Famous Five, it seemed, were wanted, and the head prefect had come for them.

"Quelch's study!" said Wingate.

"Anything up, Wingate?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Probably," answered the captain of Greyfriars dryly. "What have you young sweeps been up to this time?"

Without waiting for an answer to that question, the Greyfriars captain turned away, leaving the five juniors he had named to obey the summons to their Form-master's study.

"What on earth's up, you men?" asked Bob. "Any of you done anything?"

"Not I, that I know of," answered Harry.

"The donefulness of my esteemed self is not terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"We never have done anything!" sighed Skinner. "It's a hard life at school; fellows are always getting something for nothing."

"Anybody been pub-crawling lately?" asked Snoop, with a giggle.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, my hat! Is that it?" exclaimed Skinner, with great interest. "Have you fellows been taking any more short cuts by way of the Cross Keys?"

"Or has Quelch heard Bunter talking?" giggled Snoop. "Bunter's got a yarn that he spotted you fellows at the Three Fishers last week."

"Bunter did nothing of the kind, Snoop," said Harry Wharton very quietly. "The fat idiot was spying, and we pulled his silly leg by going round past the Three Fishers gate; I've said so already."

"Oh, quite!" giggled Snoop. "But I wonder what Quelch wants you for, all the same."

The Famous Five left the Rag with rather serious faces. They wondered, too, what Quelch wanted, and whether the fatuous babble of the fat Owl might possibly have reached his ears.

But when they arrived at the Remove master's study they realised that it was not that. Mr. Hacker was in the study with their Form-master, with an expression of concentrated anger and bitterness on his acid face. It was evidently more trouble with Hacker, though why they could not guess. They had not even seen the Acid Drop since his visit to Hobby's study at tea-time.

"You sent for us, sir?" said Harry, looking at his Form-master, and taking no notice of the master of the Shell.

"Mr. Hacker has laid a very serious complaint before me, Wharton," said Mr. Quelch. "I must question you. It appears that you were at tea in a Shell study, and there was a—a cake, which Mr. Hacker considered it his duty to confiscate. You stated that the cake was yours."

"Yes, sir," answered Harry. "It was mine, and I told Mr. Hacker so. I did not think that Mr. Hacker had a right to take it away as it was mine."

Mr. Quelch coughed.

"Mr. Hacker's authority is unquestioned in a Shell study, Wharton. The—the cake should not have been there



"Gluttony is disgusting!" said Mr. Hacker. "This cake will be confiscated!" Eight fellows stared, or rather, glared. They could hardly believe their eyes as the master of the Shell snatched up the cake.

if you did not desire it to come under Mr. Hacker's authority."

"I have not made any complaint about it, sir," said Harry, puzzled. "I have not said anything about it, except to Remove fellows."

"Have you removed that cake from Mr. Hacker's study?"

Wharton jumped.

"No, sir. I have not seen it since Mr. Hacker took it away."

"Have any of you done so?" asked Mr. Quelch, scanning the other four faces.

"No, sir."

Mr. Hacker uttered a sound resembling a snort. Only too evidently he did not believe these statements.

"Please answer me carefully!" said Mr. Quelch. "The cake has been taken from Mr. Hacker's study; he has just informed me of the fact. Someone, obviously, has removed it; and Mr. Hacker supposes—"

"I do not suppose, sir!" interrupted Mr. Hacker. "I state a fact! It is obvious that the cake has been taken away by the boy who stated that it was his, or by one of his friends."

"That," said Mr. Quelch, "is a very natural suspicion, but it does not appear to me obvious by any means. There were Shell boys, I presume, at this—this tea-party in a Shell study. They may have taken away the cake."

"I am quite assured, sir, that no boy in my Form would venture upon an act of disrespectful indiscipline!" said Mr. Hacker sharply.

Mr. Quelch bridled rather like an irritated turkey-cock.

"Do you imply, Mr. Hacker, that boys of my Form are more likely to be guilty of disrespectful indiscipline than boys of your Form?" he rumbled.

"The facts speak for themselves, Mr. Quelch."

"The facts do nothing of the kind, Mr. Hacker, as the facts are not yet

known!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "All that is known is that a confiscated cake has been removed from your study during your absence!"

"And these boys, or some of them, removed it!" said Mr. Hacker. "They are the same boys who played that rascally trick with the slide this morning!"

"They are the same boys who did nothing of the kind, Mr. Hacker! My boys, I ask you once more, have you any knowledge of what has happened in Mr. Hacker's study?"

"None whatever, sir," answered Harry. "We thought that the cake was still there, or that Mr. Hacker had sent it to the house-dame."

"You did not visit his study while he was gone out?"

"No, sir. We never knew that he had gone out at all."

"You do not know where the cake is at the present moment, Wharton?"

"No, sir. I have no idea."

"You deny that you have taken it back to your own study?" asked Mr. Hacker contemptuously.

Wharton looked at him.

"You are welcome to search my study if you cannot take my word, sir!" he answered. "Mr. Quelch knows that I am speaking the truth."

"That means, I presume, that you have placed it in some other boy's study for greater safety?" sneered Mr. Hacker.

"Would you like to search all the Remove studies, sir?" asked Bob Cherry politely. "Or to call in a detective?"

"Silence, Cherry!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch hastily.

Mr. Hacker set his thin lips.

"I am accustomed to this insolence from Remove boys!" he said bitterly. "Mr. Quelch, I demand that these boys hand over the cake immediately!"

"These boys, sir, have already stated

that they know nothing of it, and they cannot, therefore, hand it over."

"I do not believe a single word they have uttered!" retorted Mr. Hacker.

"I, on the contrary, believe every word they have uttered!" said Mr. Quelch grimly. "My boys, you may leave my study. The matter is at an end."

"Thank you, sir!"

The Famous Five marched out, smiling.

Hacker's bitter glance followed them as they went, and he turned to Quelch, breathing hard.

"You refuse to carry this matter further, Mr. Quelch?" he asked.

"No, sir," said Mr. Quelch. "I insist upon carrying it further! I insist upon questioning the Shell boys who were present—"

"That is quite unnecessary! Boys in my Form do not act in this lawless and insubordinate manner!" yapped Mr. Hacker. "I am quite assured that Hobson, Hoskins, and Stewart would not venture to do anything of the kind."

Mr. Quelch rose to his feet. He was quite as angry as Mr. Hacker now.

"Do you refuse to send for the boys in your own Form, sir?"

"I do!" said Mr. Hacker firmly.

"Then say no more on the subject; and I request you to leave my study, Mr. Hacker!"

"If those young rascals—"

"Silence, sir!"

"Wha-at?"

"Silence! I will hear no more!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "I have requested you to leave my study! Do so at once!"

Mr. Hacker looked at him. Quelch was glaring at him with majestic wrath.

Hacker opened his thin lips, and shut them again. Mr. Quelch pointed to the door.

Slowly, almost suffocated with anger, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1617.

the master of the Shell went to the door. There he paused.

"The matter does not end here, Mr. Quelch!" he almost gasped.

"Enough!"

"I repeat—"

"Will you leave my study, Mr. Hacker?"

Mr. Hacker left it, closing the door after him with a bang that rang along the passage, and reached the ears of five juniors sauntering cheerfully on their way.

Those five juniors looked at one another and grinned.

"The Acid Drop hasn't got much change out of Quelch!" remarked Bob Cherry.

"Sounds as if he hasn't!" grinned Johnny Bull.

"But who the dickens had that cake?" asked Harry.

"Goodness knows—unless Hacker ate it himself!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The mystery of the cake had to remain a mystery. There was no evidence against anybody. Billy Bunter, in the deserted French class-room, was disposing of the evidence to the last crumb and the last plum!

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Surprise For Hacker!

"BUZZ off, bluebottle!"

Harry Wharton uttered those words in Study No. 1 over his shoulder.

The Famous Five had gathered there after the interview in Mr. Quelch's study for a simple and excellent reason. Frank Nugent was baking chestnuts at the fire, and he and his friends were disposing of the same.

So when the study door opened suddenly without a knock, the captain of the Remove, without looking round, took it for granted that Billy Bunter had scented the chestnuts and barged in for a whack in the same.

Hence his remark.

"What!" exclaimed a sharp voice.

"How dare you, Wharton?"

"Oh, my hat!"

Wharton jumped up, and his friends did the same. It was Mr. Hacker who stood in the doorway.

They stared at him. It was not, after all, Bunter, though no doubt Bunter would have scented out those chestnuts had he not been busily occupied on something still more attractive than baked chestnuts. Bunter, afar, was still travelling through the cake! But what the master of the Shell wanted in the Remove quarters—where, of course, he had no business—puzzled the juniors.

"Oh, sorry, sir!" said Wharton politely. "I thought it was Bunter."

"Indeed!" sneered Mr. Hacker.

"May we ask you what you want here?" inquired Frank Nugent.

Hacker was staring round the study. He had come along quietly, and he had opened the door very suddenly.

It dawned on the Famous Five all of a sudden, and they burst into a laugh. Hacker, as he had said to Quelch, did not believe in the innocence of those innocent youths. He firmly believed that they had snaffled that cake. He had come up to catch them scoffing it.

He was both surprised and annoyed to find that they were only scoffing chestnuts. The cake, if it was there, was not on view.

Mr. Hacker's brow darkened as the juniors laughed.

"I want no impertinence!" he snapped.

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"Mayn't we laugh in our own study, sir?" inquired Wharton meekly. "Mr. Quelch would not interfere if Shell fellows laughed in their studies, sir."

Hacker made no reply to that. Certainly, the master of the Shell had no right and no power to call Removites to account for laughing or anything else in a Remove study.

"If you want anything here, sir—" went on Harry.

"You are perfectly aware why I am here, Wharton," said Hacker. "I fully expected to find you devouring the cake you have impudently taken from my study! Where is it?"

"And you are perfectly aware, sir, that you have no right to enter Remove studies and question Remove boys," answered Wharton calmly. "We are answerable to our own Form-master and to the Head, and nobody else!"

"If you persist in this impertinence, Wharton—"

"I am ready to repeat my words, sir, in the presence of my Form-master!" answered Harry.

"Hear, hear!" murmured Bob Cherry.

Mr. Hacker looked at Wharton, really as if he could have bitten him. He was quite well aware of the view Quelch would take of his butting into the Remove if Quelch knew. But he controlled his temper.

"You stated in your Form-master's study that I was welcome to search your study, Wharton!" he said sardonically. "No doubt a mere figure of speech, intended to delude your Form-master!"

"Not at all," answered Harry. "You can search the study, if you like, Mr. Hacker. You have no right to do so, but I have no objection."

"And if you find a cake here, sir, I'll eat it!" said Bob affably.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come out into the passage, my esteemed chums," said Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh. "Let us give the esteemed Mr. Hacker a free hand in his absurd search."

"I don't see shifting!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"My esteemed Johnny, it would be more preposterously respectful to Mr. Hacker!" said the Nabob of Bhanipur, closing one eye at Johnny.

"Oh! All right!" said Johnny, realising that the dusky nabob had some reason for vacating the study which he did not care to state in Mr. Hacker's presence.

The Famous Five stepped out into the passage.

Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh drew the door shut.

"What—" began Bob.

The nabob laid his finger on his lips, and went quickly up the passage. His chums, rather perplexed, followed him as far as Study No. 13, where he hesitated. Study No. 13 belonged to Bob, the nabob, and two other fellows, both of whom were downstairs in the Rag at the moment.

"Now, what—" asked Johnny Bull.

"Estimable and ridiculous Hacker is searching Wharton's study for an absurd cake!" murmured the Nabob of Bhanipur. "He will not find it—"

"Hardly—as it isn't there."

"Therefore he will come along and look in your study, my esteemed Bob—"

"Bound to!" agreed Bob. "But what about it?"

"It has occurred to my debilitated brain that the absurd Hacker might meet with a terrific surprise in that study!" explained Hurree Singh.

"Oh!" exclaimed Bob. His eyes danced as he caught on. "Inky, old

man, you're a giddy genius! Quick, though—he won't be long!"

The Famous Five lost no time. It was practically certain that if Hacker drew Study No. 1 blank—as he was bound to do—he would look in the studies belonging to other members of the suspected Co. In five minutes, probably, he would be poking his suspicious head into Study No. 13, as he had poked it into Study No. 1.

Five minutes was more, however, than the cheery Removites required to prepare a little surprise for Horace Hacker.

Johnny Bull whipped a chair out of his study—No. 14—to stand on. Hurree Singh and Bob brought armfuls of books out of Study No. 13.

The Nabob of Bhanipur stood on the chair to reach the top of the door. The door was placed a few inches open—just room enough to slip the books up between it and the lintel.

A large and heavy Latin dictionary was carefully placed, one end resting on the top of the door, the other on the ledge over the doorway.

The other volumes were slipped up, one after another, and lodged on top of the dictionary.

Then the grinning nabob stepped down; the chair was whipped back into Study No. 14, and the Famous Five followed it there.

Fisher T. Fish was in that study, and he stared at them; but they did not heed Fishy. They gathered inside the door and waited.

They had several minutes to wait. Hacker, it appeared, was putting in rather a thorough search in Study No. 1. No doubt he supposed that that was the most probable place, as the cake belonged to Wharton!

But he came out at last into the Remove passage.

There he glanced round him, perhaps surprised to see that the Famous Five had gone. Then he came up the passage with his quick, jerky steps.

"He's coming!" breathed Bob Cherry, inside the door of Study No. 14.

The chums of the Remove suppressed their merriment as they waited.

Fisher T. Fish stared at them blankly.

"Say, big boys, what's the big idea?" he inquired.

"Quiet, fathead!" answered Bob. "Hacker's just going to put his head in a booby-trap!"

"Listen!" breathed Nugent.

The Famous Five listened with all their ears. Mr. Hacker arrived at the door of Study No. 13. He did not knock at that door; he pushed it open and stepped in, as he had done at Study No. 1.

The juniors almost held their breath. Crash! Bang! Crash!

"Ooooooooooooooooo!" came a startled howl.

Horace Hacker had the surprise of his life as he stepped into Study No. 13. A shower of books caught him fairly on his mortar-board. They crashed and banged on his astonished head. The mortar-board flew off, falling to the floor in the midst of the volumes.

Mr. Hacker staggered in the doorway, yelling. He staggered, stumbled over one of the volumes, lost his footing, and sat down.

Bump!

He sat down suddenly, and he sat down hard. And he fairly roared as he sat!

From Study No. 14 came another roar. The Famous Five had intended to remain silent. But they couldn't. They yelled!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh! Oh! Ooooh!" came a howl

from the passage. "What—w—who—what—what— Oh! Oooogh! Wooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" Mr. Hacker staggered up. He stared round him dizzily. Even yet he did not seem to realise what had happened.

"What—what—" he stuttered. But the sight of the scattered volumes enlightened him. Obviously they had been perched on top of the door, waiting for a visitor.

Hacker grabbed up his mortar-board and jammed it back on his head. The yell of laughter from Study No. 14 apprised him where the juniors were, and, with a crimson face of fury, he jumped to the door of Study No. 14 and hurled it open.

Five grinning faces greeted him as he looked in.

"You—you—you—" spluttered Mr. Hacker. He was almost gibbering. "You—you—you have dared—"

"Has anything happened, sir?" asked Bob Cherry meekly.

"You young knaves!" thundered Mr. Hacker.

"Oh, sir! I don't think Mr. Quelch would like you to use such expressions to us, sir!"

"What! You young rascal! Do you dare to deny that you placed books on your study door, to fall upon my head?" shrieked Mr. Hacker. He rubbed his head.

"Did you put your head into my study, sir?" asked Bob innocently. "Did you want anything in my study, sir?"

"What did you want in our study, esteemed Mr. Hacker?" asked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh in mild surprise. Mr. Hacker gazed at them.

They had him on the hip, and he knew it. He had no right whatever to enter Bob Cherry's study, but Bob undoubtedly had a right to stack books, if he chose, on top of his own study door.

For a long, long moment, Horace Hacker gazed at those cheery faces. Then, in silence, he turned away. He

went down the Remove passage to the landing, rubbing his head as he went.

Apparently he had given up the search for that cake; probably he had a pain or two in his bony napper! Anyhow, he went—and the chums of the Remove chortled as he disappeared.

"Ha, ha, ha!" That cheery sound reached Hacker as he went down the Remove staircase, and the happy sound of boyish laughter was pleasant to his ears—perhaps!

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Talks Too Much!

"I SAY, you fellows!" On the following afternoon, which was Saturday and a half-holiday, Harry Wharton & Co. might have been seen—and, as a matter of fact, were seen—going down to the gates, swinging skates in their hands.

It was fearfully cold; the weather was freezing; icicles glistened all over the place in the glimmering, wintry sunshine. Which did not worry the Famous Five at all, but rather pleased them, for it meant that the ice on the Sark would bear. And if the ice was good, they were going to get some skating that afternoon in agreeable company, as Marjorie & Co., their girl chums, were coming along from Cliff House for the same purpose.

Billy Bunter, in the gateway, was blinking out into the road.

Lord Mauleverer had gone out, and Bunter suspected that Mauly had very likely gone to Courtfield for tea at the bunshop there. For which reason the fat Owl was thinking of following in Mauly's track. But Bunter did not like cold weather, or icy roads; and even tea at the bunshop, with a freezing walk thrown in, seemed rather less attractive than a frowst by the fire in the Rag. The fat junior was still debating the problem in his fat mind when the Famous Five came swinging

cheerily along, and he turned his spectacles on them.

And he grinned. Another pair of eyes turned on those cheery juniors—but the owner thereof did not grin. He frowned! It was Mr. Hacker who was standing in the porch of Gosling's lodge, speaking to the porter within.

Five cheery and ruddy faces were really pleasing to the view. But they did not please Mr. Hacker. The sight of the Famous Five, indeed, produced on Mr. Hacker the effect of a red rag on a bull!

Harry Wharton & Co., in the happy way of youth, had almost forgotten the incidents of the previous day. Mr. Hacker had not! Mr. Hacker had a long memory for offences, real or fancied.

Those five cheery juniors were five young rascals! Slipping on a slide, missing a confiscated cake, and getting a shower of books on his napper, convinced Mr. Hacker of that! His glance at the happy five was sour.

They did not heed him—and would not have heeded Bunter had not the fat Owl drawn their attention by an extensive and expansive grin and a prolonged cachinnation.

"He, he, he! I say you fellows, at it again!" he chortled.

"At what again, you benighted Owl?" inquired Harry Wharton politely.

"Think I don't know?" grinned Bunter.

"Which and what, you fat foozler?" asked Bob.

"Is it the Cross Keys, or the Three Fishers, this time?" grinned Bunter. "I say, you fellows, you'll get copped if you keep it up."

"You fat, flabby, frowsy, foozling frump!" said Bob, in measured tones. "We're going skating down the Sark!"

"He, he, he!"

"Marjorie, and Clara, and Babs, and Mabs will be there!" said Frank Nugent. "If you want to amuse them,

(Continued on page 12.)

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Bunter, come along and skate! You're fearfully amusing on the ice."

"Too jolly cold!" said Bunter. "Besides, I know you ain't really going skating."

"Do you think we're taking the skates out for a walk, fathead?"

"Deep!" said Bunter.

"What's deep, you blitherer?"

"He, he, he! Think I don't know!" chuckled Bunter. "Those skates are for the beaks and prefects to see! Fat lot of skating you'll do—at the Cross Keys! I say, if you're copped again, are you going to spin the same yarn about taking a short cut? I fancy it won't wash twice! He, he, he!"

Harry Wharton lifted his boot; but he let it drop again. The fat Owl was not worth booting!

Billy Bunter grinned, quite satisfied with his own acuteness. Masters or prefects, seeing the juniors going out with those skates, would naturally suppose that they were going skating—as, indeed, they were!

Bunter knew better.

Bunter had no doubt that those pub-crawling sweeps were going out of bounds, and that the skates were artful camouflage.

"Deep—but not deep enough for me!" declared Bunter. "All right for Quelch, I dare say! He swallowed that yarn of yours a week or two ago, about taking a short cut by Cross Keys Lane! I wonder what he would think if he knew where you were last Wednesday?"

"You blithering, blethering, blathering bloater!" roared Johnny Bull. "We've told you a dozen times that we were only pulling your silly leg, going round by the Three Fishers gate, because we knew you were prying."

"He, he, he!"

"Oh, bump him!" growled Johnny.

"I say, you fellows, I ain't going to give you away!" assured Bunter. "I know where you went all right, but I ain't going to tell Quelch! He, he, he! You jolly well never knew I was shadowing you that day, and I jolly well know where you went, and—"

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Bob Cherry, his glance falling on a bony figure in Gosling's porch. "There's Hacker—taking it all in."

The Famous Five looked round quickly. They had not noticed Hacker at the porter's door, till then.

Now, as they saw him, they saw that his attention was fixed on them; and his look showed, clearly enough, that he was "taking it all in." Not a word of the fat Owl's had escaped his sharp ears.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter, as he turned startled spectacles on the master of the Shell. "I—I say, you fellows, I never saw Hacker! I say, I never meant to give you away to a beak, you know."

The Famous Five did not take the trouble to repeat, for the umpteenth time, that there was nothing to give away! They wasted no more words on the fat Owl; they proceeded to action instead.

They collared Billy Bunter, jerked him off his feet, and sat him down in the gateway with a heavy bump!

Bunter roared.

Leaving him sitting and roaring, the chums of the Remove went out at the gate and swung on their way towards the towpath down the frozen river.

"Owl! Beasts! Wow!" howled Bunter. "Oh crikey! Owl!"

A bony figure bent over the fat Owl, and jerked him to his feet. He gasped for breath, and blinked at Mr. Hacker. Hacker's eyes were glinting.

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"Bunter! I heard what you said to those Remove boys!" said Mr. Hacker.

"Oh crikey! I—I mean, I—I never said anything!" gasped Bunter. "I—I—I mean to say, I wasn't—I mean, I never—"

"Do not prevaricate, Bunter!" said Mr. Hacker sharply. "I heard you say that you followed them, one day last week, to a disreputable resort out of school bounds. Is that true?"

"Oh! Yes! No!" gasped Bunter. "I—I never knew you were listening, sir!"

"What! How dare you be impertinent! Did you follow those boys to the place called the Three Fishers, or not?"

Bunter blinked at him. He was fully convinced, in his own fat and obtuse mind, that the Famous Five had gone pub-crawling, and that he had spotted them. But he wasn't going to give them away to a beak! Not Bunter!

"I—I ain't going to tell about them, sir!" he gasped, backing away from the master of the Shell. "I—I don't know anything about them, really! I—I never followed them that day last week, and they never went to the Three Fishers, and I didn't wait outside to watch them when they came out. The—the fact is, I—I believe that they were gone over to Highcliffe, when they were at the Three Fishers that day—"

"What!"

"I—I mean, when they weren't at the Three Fishers!" gasped Bunter. "I—I never saw them at all that afternoon. I was in quite another place. I—I say, sir, Toddy's calling me!"

Had Bunter been in Mr. Hacker's Form, he would not have escaped from the Acid Drop so easily. But Hacker had no authority over Quelch's boys—indeed, he was exceeding his rights and powers by questioning Bunter at all about other Remove boys. So when the fat Owl rolled off, in response to an imaginary call from Toddy, Hacker had no choice but to let him go.

He would have been glad of some more details. Still, he had heard enough to open his eyes on the subject of those five young rascals!

He stood in the gateway, staring grimly in the direction they had taken.

Undisciplined, disrespectful, untruthful—and breakers of bounds, haunters of pubs, as well! That was now Mr. Hacker's happy opinion of the five!

It was clear enough—to the Acid Drop!

Had Bunter willingly sneaked about them, he would have been distrusted when heard. But Bunter, plainly, had wanted to avoid sneaking—he did not want to bear witness against his Form fellows. Hacker had had to drag it out of him!

Bunter, a week ago, had spied on those young rascals, and followed them to the Three Fishers. From that, he knew that they were now bound for a similar resort, taking their skates as camouflage. Unconsciously, and unwillingly, he had let Hacker know what he knew! It was all clear—to Horace Hacker!

And, after a few minutes of grim and bitter meditation, the Acid Drop walked out of gates, and took the direction followed by the Famous Five.

They were going down the river to skate—were they? Well, if he beheld them skating on the frozen Sark, all was well! But if he did not—

If he did not, he would know what to think—and shortly afterwards, their Form-master would know what to think!

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

On The Ice!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry, and he waved his cap.

The Famous Five had set out to walk along the bank of the Sark to the meeting-place near Friardale Bridge. But noting that the ice was good, they decided to skate on their way instead; and they went down the frozen Sark with a whizz.

They were utterly unaware that Mr. Hacker had walked after them, and had not the remotest idea of dodging him, or anybody else. But had they wanted to do so, they could not have done it more effectually. They were out of sight long before Hacker reached the towpath.

They shot past the bridge, and at a little distance farther on, five figures were sighted on the bank.

The meeting-place was much nearer to Cliff House School than to Greyfriars; but the schoolboys were first on the spot, owing to their rapid travelling.

Marjorie & Co. were coming down to the bank, and Bob waved his cap and roared a greeting.

The Co. had expected to see four—Marjorie Hazeldene, Clara Trevlyn, Barbara Redfern, and Mabel Lynn. But they saw five—the fifth member of the party being a feminine double of Billy Bunter—no other than his sister Bessie.

Miss Bunter, it seemed, had joined the skating party; and the Famous Five, if they were not delighted to see Miss Bunter, politely concealed the fact that they weren't.

Any member of the tribe of Bunter was always a bother; and, on the ice, likely to be more than usually bothersome. Each member of the Co. could only hope that he would not be the fellow to be clutched by Bessie.

"Here we are again, old beans!" trilled Miss Clara. "Is the ice good?"

"Fine!" answered Harry.

"Think it will stand Bessie?"

"Hem!"

"Cat!" said Bessie, turning her spectacles on Miss Clara. "If it will stand your feet it will stand anything."

"Shall I help you on with your skates, Bessie?" asked Marjorie hastily.

"No. Think I can't put my skates on?"

"Oh! Very well! What a ripping day for skating!"

"Topping!" said Babs.

"The topfulness is terrific, esteemed and beauteous misses!" said Horace Jamset Ram Singh.

"Not to say preposterous!" added Bob Cherry.

"Ready, Bessie?" asked Mabel Lynn.

"No; wait for me."

"Bow-wow!" said Miss Clara.

Bessie Bunter, like her brother, was slow in her movements. The other girls had not, it appeared, come out that half-holiday to watch Bessie in slow motion! Marjorie paused; but Babs and Mabs and Clara slid out on the ice. Bessie laboured with her skates, and grunted.

"I say, you girls, I think you might lend me a hand, some of you!" squeaked Bessie.

"I offered to help," said Marjorie mildly.

"You keep on talking instead of doing anything!" said Bessie Bunter. "Chin, chin, chin, all the time! I suppose you want me to sit about and catch cold!"

Marjorie's temper, fortunately, was kind and patient. She lent the neces-



"Ain't you looking for the saloon bar?" asked Bill Lodgey. "Certainly not!" hooted Mr. Hacker. "Well, if you want the bottle-and-jug——" "Silence! Stand aside!" hissed the master. "A number of Greyfriars boys are here, and I have come to take them back to the school!"

sary helping hand, and Bessie was equipped, at last, for exploits on the ice. She clung to Marjorie, and blinked rather doubtfully at the ice.

"Is it slippery?" she asked.

"Oh!" gasped Marjorie. "Yes! Ice is generally slippery."

"I don't want to fall over! Hold me!"

"Oh!" gasped Marjorie again.

Marjorie was willing—more than willing—to do her best! But supporting the weight of Miss Elizabeth Bunter was beyond her powers! That weight was equal, or very nearly equal, to Brother Billy's.

"Bob!" called out Marjorie.

"What-ho!"

Bob Cherry shot up, like an arrow from a bow.

His friends, by tacit agreement, left Marjorie to Bob. Bob was a good skater, and Marjorie still better; and both had looked forward to a happy hour on the ice. But there was, so to speak, a lion in the path—in the form of Miss Elizabeth Bunter.

"Hold me!" squeaked Bessie.

"Will you help Bessie, Bob?" murmured Marjorie.

Bob Cherry would have gone through fire and water for Miss Hazeldene. But, really, he wanted to skate with Marjorie, not to totter about in the grip of something like an octopus.

But Marjorie's wish was law.

"Oh, yes!" gasped Bob. "Pleasure!"

"Don't let me slip over!" said Bessie, as she clutched. "This ice is slippery. I knew it would be! I jolly well knew! I wish I hadn't come!"

Bob—silently—echoed that wish!

"Don't be clumsy!" added Miss Bunter, as Bob steered her skilfully on the ice. "You nearly pushed me over, then."

"If you wouldn't hold quite so tight!" murmured Bob.

"Don't be silly!"

"Oh!"

Bob was all good nature. He played up manfully. Wharton and Nugent and Johnny Bull and the nabob, Clara, and Babs and Mabs and Marjorie, were having quite a good time. Bob wasn't! But he knew that it was because Marjorie liked him best that she had asked him to take charge of Bessie Bunter, and that was sufficient comfort for him.

"We're going too far from the bank!" exclaimed Bessie suddenly.

"Can't skate on the bank, you know!" murmured Bob. "Besides, there's another bank on the other side."

"Are you always as silly as that?" inquired Bessie.

"Oh!"

"You can't skate!" continued Miss Bunter. "I'm all right with a good skater. Now I don't feel safe."

"Oh dear! I—I mean, safe as houses!" said Bob reassuringly.

"Suppose I came down wallop?" demanded Miss Bunter. "The ice might not stand it."

Bob could not help thinking that perhaps Miss Bunter was right there. Arctic ice would have been required to stand the strain if Elizabeth Bunter came down wallop on it.

"I won't let you go down wallop!" assured Bob.

"Well, don't be clumsy!"

"I—I—I'll try not to be."

"Not much good trying," said Bessie. "Boys are all clumsy! Look at my brother Billy! Still, he isn't clumsy like you."

"Oh!"

"I think I'm all right now!" said Miss Bunter, after a pause. "You

needn't grab me like that! Grabbing like a lobster!"

"Oh!"

Under Bob's skilful care, Bessie had become confident. That confidence was rather ill-founded, however, as Miss Bunter discovered when she abandoned Bob's guidance and shot away on her own.

The ice, as Bessie had discovered, was slippery! It was, in fact, fearfully slippery!

Exactly what happened, Bessie hardly knew. She spun on one foot, and then on the other, and then came down—wallop!

It was "some" wallop!

Miss Bunter smote the ice like a ton of coal. It was thick—but it was hardly thick enough to stand that. Long cracks appeared in the frozen surface, and dark water bubbled through. Shriek after shriek pealed from Bessie.

"Help! Save me! Help! Yoo-hoop! Help!"

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bob.

He sped to the rescue. Other skaters circled round and helped. Many hands made light work; and Bessie Bunter, still shrieking, was safely landed on the bank. In the circumstances, however, it was clear that Bessie considered herself entitled to shriek. She sat on the bank, and, between gasps for breath, shrieked and shrieked.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Tea At Cliff House!

"BESSIE, dear!" gasped Marjorie. Shriek!

"For the love of Mike," said Clara Trevlyn, "stop it!"

"Cat!"

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(Continued from page 13.)

"Aren't you all right now, Fatima?" demanded Babs.

"No!"

"What's the matter, then?" asked Mabs.

"I'm wet! I'm damp! I've hurt my foot! I knew that ice was slippery! I told Marjorie so! Lot she cared!"

"But—" murmured Marjorie.

"You wanted to see me come down wallop!" said Bessie accusingly. "So did Bob! I believe he was clumsy on purpose."

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob.

"You let go—"

"But—but you asked me to!" gurgled Bob. "You said I was grabbing like a lobster, and—"

"Any excuse is better than none!" said Miss Bunter scornfully. "Now, I've hurt my foot! I can't skate any more, and I can't walk! Now, I hope you're satisfied."

Miss Bunter's hope was quite unfounded. Nobody was satisfied. Not a single face expressed anything remotely like satisfaction.

"I shall have to go back now," said Miss Bunter crossly. "I think somebody might take my skates off! I really think that!"

Somebody took Miss Bunter's skates off.

"Is anybody going to help me, or am I to sit here till I catch my death of cold?" asked Miss Bunter. "Perhaps you'd like to go on skating, while I sneeze and cough and catch pneumonia."

Many hands made light work again. Bessie was helped up. She stood on one foot—the other, it seemed, was damaged. Excruciating agony was depicted in Miss Bunter's plump face.

Other faces were sympathetic. It was not quite clear how Bessie could have got badly hurt; but, if it was so, sympathy was hers to command.

"Who's going to help me home?" inquired Bessie.

"I will, Bessie!" said Marjorie, at once.

"So will I!" said Bob Cherry, so promptly that a grin appeared on the faces of his chums, reflected on the faces of Babs and Mabs and Clara.

They could not help suspecting that it was not Bessie's company for which Bob yearned, in a walk to Cliff House.

"Hold me carefully," said Bessie. "I haven't put any weight on that foot! Luckily, I don't weigh much. But it's frightfully painful. You won't be able to help me all the way, Marjorie. The others had better come."

The others exchanged expressive glances. Perhaps Bessie noted those glances, for she gave a deep moan of agony.

"Ooooooooooh!"

"Let's all go!" said Harry Wharton. "We'll take it in turns to help Bessie. After all, we've had some skating."

"Isn't it like a boy to think about skating when I'm in such awful pain!" said Bessie.

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"Oh!"

"My esteemed and beauteous miss, the sympathise is terrific!" declared Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "Let us all proceed walkfully to Cliff House, and convey the delightful Miss Bessie turnfully."

"Ooooo!" moaned Bessie.

Skates were taken off, and the whole party started, with Miss Bunter in the midst of a sympathetic crowd.

No doubt that foot had had a knock, when Miss Bunter came down wallop on the ice. But, from their experience of Brother Billy, the juniors had a suspicion that Miss Bunter was making a mountain out of a molehill.

Had Sister Bessie been Brother Billy, in fact, they would have stated that opinion in the plain language of the Lower Fourth.

But Miss Bunter was not Brother Billy—she was Sister Bessie—so politeness came first. They carried their skates, and helped Miss Bunter in turn, and the frozen river was left behind.

Progress was slow. Bessie Bunter was never rapid, and in this state of agonised disablement she was slower than ever. It might have been a party of snails that progressed along Pegg Lane towards Cliff House School.

Still, it was a pleasant walk, in the keen, frosty air, with the sea shining in the distance under the wintry sunshine. They came in sight of the gate of Cliff House School at long last.

Bessie blinked at a figure looking out of the gateway.

"Who's that?" she asked.

"Only our beak!" answered Clara.

"If it's Miss Bellew, I don't want her to see me!" exclaimed Bessie, coming to a halt. "She told me not to go out till I'd done my lines. If she sees me coming in, she'll guess I've been out—she's as sharp as a needle!"

"Oh!"

"Wait till she's gone in!" said Bessie.

The party halted by the side of the lane, Bessie backing into the hedge.

They waited, as patiently as possible, for Miss Bellew, Form-mistress of the Cliff House Fourth, to go in at the gate.

"All right now, Bessie!" said Bob, as the figure at the gate disappeared, going in.

"Sure she's gone?" asked Bessie cautiously.

"Yes; she's gone in."

"I don't want to be caught, you know! Miss Bellew would make out that I'd gone out without doing my lines."

"W-w-w-would she?"

"Yes; she's a cat!"

"Oh!"

The party progressed once more. Bessie Bunter's eyes, and spectacles, were fixed on the gateway.

But there was no sign of the mistress of the Fourth there, and the plump schoolgirl was reassured.

Leaning heavily on sympathetic supporters, Bessie Bunter limped in at the gate.

"Oh!" exclaimed Clara. "There's Miss Bellew—"

"What?" squeaked Bessie.

"At the porter's lodge—she'll see you if she looks round—"

Bessie gave one alarmed blink at the mistress of the Fourth Form—standing at the porter's lodge, her back fortunately turned to the incoming party. Bessie stayed for only one blink. Any moment, Miss Bellew might have turned her head! Bessie did not give her a moment!

Suddenly relinquishing the supporting, sympathetic arms, Bessie Bunter

turned, and shot out of the gateway! She shot almost like an arrow.

Five schoolboys and four schoolgirls stared after her blankly as she shot.

Nothing appeared to be amiss with Bessie's damaged foot now! In fact, she had forgotten it, in her alarm at the sight of Miss Bellew at close quarters!

Bessie fairly whizzed out of the gate and disappeared.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob.

"Her foot—" exclaimed Babs.

"Gammon!" said Miss Clara. "I knew it was gammon!"

"Well, it can't have been a fearfully fearful injury!" said Harry Wharton, laughing. "It seems to have been cured very suddenly."

"Bessie all over!" said Clara. "She's always spoofing!"

"She must have fancied—" murmured Marjorie.

"Bow-wow!" said Clara. "All right—if she stays out—there will be enough cake to go round at tea."

The Famous Five, having arrived at Cliff House, and Miss Primrose having graciously given permission for tea in the school-room, there was tea—which no member of the party was likely to enjoy less on account of the sudden departure and disappearance of Miss Elizabeth Bunter.

But the tea-party had hardly commenced operations, when the door opened, and a plump countenance and a big pair of spectacles blinked in.

"I say, you girls—"

"Bessie!"

"You might have waited for me!" said Miss Bunter. "I dodged her all right—I got in at the other gate! She can spot me now, if she likes—she won't be able to make out that I've been out of gates! She would if she could—she's a cat! I say, I'll start with cake."

Miss Bunter started with cake, and finished with cake; owing to which, there was not, after all, enough to go round. But there was enough for Miss Elizabeth Bunter, so that was all right!

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Horrid For Hacker!

MR. HACKER smiled—a bitter smile.

Standing on Friardale Bridge, he swept the frozen river with his keen eyes, up the Sark and down the Sark.

Not a skater was to be seen.

In one spot, two or three village boys were sliding. But no skaters were out—and not a Greyfriars cap was to be seen on the horizon.

The walk down the river as far as the bridge had taken Mr. Hacker a little over half an hour. The distance had taken the Famous Five, who had skated it, only a matter of minutes. Had they been skating now, Mr. Hacker certainly would have seen them—could not possibly have failed to do so, in the clear, frosty air! Which was why the Acid Drop smiled that bitter, sardonic smile.

Distinctly, he had heard them tell Billy Bunter that they were going skating down the Sark. He had heard one of them say that the Cliff House girls would be there to skate. They had certainly taken skates with them. Obviously, to Hacker, camouflage, as the fat Owl had believed.

For, if they had gone skating, where were they? If the Cliff House girls were in the offing, where, also, were they? The thing was clear enough—to Hacker!

He quitted the bridge, at length, and walked back slowly up the towpath. Not far up was the gate that gave on Cross Keys Lane, and the long garden of that disreputable inn, which fronted on Friardale Lane. Billy Bunter had suspected that that was the destination of the five. So had Hacker—and now he knew it! It wasn't so, in point of fact—but Hacker knew it, all the same, without the shadow of a doubt.

At that gate he paused.

The five young scoundrels were there! They were not in his Form, certainly; but it was the duty of any Greyfriars master to intervene in such a case! This kind of thing could not be allowed.

Queleh was not likely to be pleased when he heard. That, however, only added to Mr. Hacker's zest. He did not want to please Queleh! He wanted to make Queleh admit what young rascals those five juniors were! He wanted to force on Queleh the painful duty of taking them to the Head! That would be a very agreeable return for the way Queleh had treated his complaints of those shady young scoundrels!

Looking over the gate at the muddy lane and the weedy, unkempt garden, and the Cross Keys visible through leafless trees in the distance, the Acid Drop considered and reflected.

Useless to report what he knew! They were capable of denying it—as they had denied catching him on the slide, and snaffling the confiscated cake from his study! Queleh would believe them, or affect to believe them, as Hacker sourly preferred to think.

Catching them in the act was the only way. Even Queleh would not venture to reject the evidence of Hacker's own eyes.

As a respectable man and a Form-master, Hacker hesitated to enter such precincts. But it was clear that he was not going to spot anybody inside the building by looking over a distant gate. He entered.

With keen eyes about him, Hacker walked up the muddy lane beside the long inn-garden, and, near the building, entered that garden.

At the back of the Cross Keys was an old wooden veranda with slipshod wooden steps leading up into it. That, of course, was the way the breakers of bounds would go—the most reckless young rascal would hardly venture to walk into that pub by the front door!

Hacker stepped on those steps.

As he did so, he had a glimpse of a figure standing at a french window, in a sitting-room a little along the veranda.

Some fellow, in that room, was leaning back against the french window; and, although he was indoors, his cap was still on his head—perhaps because he had no respect for his surroundings or his company, or perhaps to be ready for a hasty exit in case of necessity.

Hacker's eyes glittered. It was a Greyfriars cap!

He breathed hard through his sharp nose, and gazed intently.

He could only see the back of the head. But from the height, it was evident that the fellow was a junior—the average height of a boy in the Lower Fourth!

Had he looked round, Hacker would have seen his face through the glass. But he did not look round, being in conversation with someone in the room, whom Hacker could not see.

Hacker smiled—more sardonically than before.

He had been certain already, but this was proof! There was a Greyfriars junior, under his very eyes—one of the rascally five, of course! No doubt the

others were in that room! Playing banker probably, or nap, and smoking—with Mr. Lodgey, or some such disreputable sporting character! Hacker had only, like a hawk, to swoop!

He stepped on the veranda, and moved swiftly along to that window. The back of a schoolboy's head was still visible, and in another moment Hacker would have been jerking open the french window.

But as he came opposite the window he was, of course, in view of the other person in the room, who was sitting facing the fellow who leaned back on the window.

Mr. Bill Lodgey gave a jump at the sudden sight of a bony figure and acid face through the glass.

No doubt he uttered a quick warning, for the schoolboy jumped away from the window without looking round, and cut straight across the room to a door on the other side leading into the interior of the building.

Hacker grabbed the french window and jerked.

It came wide open in his hand, and at the same moment the door on the farther side of the room slammed after the disappearing schoolboy in the Greyfriars cap.

Mr. Hacker stepped swiftly in. Taking no notice of the staring Lodgey, he strode across the room. Mr. Lodgey, however, whipped out of his chair and placed his back against the inner door before Hacker could reach it.

"Old on, sir!" said Mr. Lodgey. "This 'ere is private."

"Stand out of my way!" said Mr. Hacker sharply. "I insist upon going through that door! Stand aside!"

Bill Lodgey did not stand aside. One of his very best clients—no other than Herbert Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars—had had an awfully narrow escape! Bill did not mean to let Mr. Hacker pass till the Bounder had had time to get clear.

"Skuse me, sir!" said Bill, his squat, podgy figure backed against the door. "You come in the wrong way, sir! The saloon bar is round the corner."

Mr. Hacker gave him a concentrated glare. He was a respectable school-master, and he had no use for saloon bars.

"Will you stand aside?" he snapped. "Ain't you looking for the saloon bar?" asked Bill.

"Certainly not!" hooted Mr. Hacker.

"Well, if you want the bottle-and-jug—"

"Silence! Stand aside! I am a Greyfriars master, as I believe you are aware, and a number of Greyfriars boys are here. I am here to take them back to the school. Will you let me pass immediately?"

Bill Lodgey stared at him.

One Greyfriars boy, certainly, had been there—Herbert Vernon-Smith. No others, to Bill's knowledge, had been anywhere about. But Mr. Hacker, assured that he had seen one of the Famous Five, had no doubt that the other four were there—probably in the billiards-room. He naturally wanted to nail them before they had time to scud. He came very near laying his bony hands on the beery racing man who barred his way.

"There ain't no schoolboys 'ere, sir," said Bill. "They ain't allowed in 'ere. This 'ere is my private room, and I don't thank you for 'iking into it without being asked. I'll ask you to step out the way you come in."

"I saw one of them, and I am assured that the others are here!" exclaimed Mr. Hacker. "I insist upon passing."

"You can insist till you're black in

the face, old 'un!" retorted Bill. "But you ain't hordering a covey about in his own quarters, you ain't! Wot right you got in 'ere, I'm asking you."

Hacker breathed wrath.

He had no right there at all—any more right than he had in a Remove study. He had bagged a booby-trap by butting into a Remove study the day before. Now he was bagging something worse than a booby-trap.

"Outside!" said Bill Lodgey. "Why, I could give you in charge, I could, for shoving in a gentleman's private apartments. 'Ow'd you like me to come 'iking into your school as cool as you please?"

"Will you let me pass?" hissed Mr. Hacker.

"No, I won't," said Bill Lodgey coolly. "But I'll tell you what I will do—if you don't walk out the way you come in, I'll 'elp you out! Now, then!"

Bill detached himself from the door and advanced on Mr. Hacker.

He had no doubt that Herbert Vernon-Smith had got clear by that time, and he was very much annoyed with Mr. Hacker for interrupting the interview. He thrust out a stubbly jaw aggressively as he advanced on Hacker.

"I refuse to go!" gasped Mr. Hacker. "I refuse—"

"Then I'll 'elp yer, like I said!" grunted Bill Lodgey, and he started with a push that made Mr. Hacker stagger.

A bony fist landed on his podgy face the next moment.

Hacker's temper was near boiling-point already, and it boiled over at that rough push from a dingy, grubby character like Bill Lodgey.

"Oooogh!" howled Mr. Lodgey, as he caught Hacker's sharp knuckles.

And he charged!

Mr. Hacker staggered back from that charge. He went staggering and tumbling back to the french window, and went through that window backwards, sitting down, suddenly and hard, on the creaking old veranda.

"Oh!" he gasped. "Goodness gracious! Oh!"

From the french window Bill Lodgey glared at him.

"You can sit there as long as you like!" he said. "That's public. But you can't shove into a gentleman's private apartments, and if you're a schoolmaster you ought to know that much. Sit there if you like, but if you put your blinking long nose in 'ere ag'in you'll get it 'it, 'ard!"

Mr. Hacker appeared to have no fancy for sitting there. He scrambled to his feet, and, after a look of contempt and deadly wrath at Bill Lodgey, went down the steps into the garden.

By that time, he had no doubt, the shady young scoundrels had escaped. It was futile to look for them further, even if Bill Lodgey had not been blocking the way. With deep, very deep feelings, the Acid Drop started to walk back to Greyfriars School, wondering bitterly whether those young rascals would venture to deny where they had been that afternoon, although he had seen one of them there with his own eyes.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

What Bunter Didn't Know!

"BUNTER, you ass!"

"Oh, really, Hobson—"

"What have you been doing to my beak?" asked Hobson of the Shell.

"Eh? Nothing," answered Billy

Bunter, blinking in surprise at the captain of the Shell. "I haven't seen him since the last time, you know."

"Oh, my hat! Well, your beak has just told me to send you to his study, and my beak's there," said Hobby. "Mind what you say—Hacker looked shirty."

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter, in great alarm. "I never had it! If they think I had it, it's all a mistake! I never knew Hacker had snooped that cake at all yesterday, so I couldn't have gone to his study after it, could I?"

Hobson stared at him.

"Oh crumbs! Was it you——"

"No," howled Bunter, "it wasn't! I never went near Hacker's study. I don't really know which is his study. The cake was gone when I got there, too. I shall jolly well tell Quelch so if he asks me! I'm not going to have it put on me!"

"Oh!" gasped Hobson. "Oh! My only summer hat!"

"They always put it on me!" said Bunter, with deep indignation. "A fellow can't miss a bullseye without making out that I had it. Now they're going to make out that I had that cake. Hacker all over! I jolly well know that he never saw me behind the door! Besides, I wasn't behind the door. I wasn't in the study at all! I was somewhere else when I was there, and I'll jolly well say so, too, if Hacker makes out that it was me."

And Bunter rolled off to Mr. Quelch's study, leaving James Hobson gurgling.

In deep uneasiness, Billy Bunter tapped at the door of that study and entered.

Mr. Quelch and Mr. Hacker were there—both grimly silent—waiting for him.

"Bunter——" began Mr. Quelch.

"It wasn't me, sir!" said Bunter hurriedly. "I wasn't there at all. If Mr. Hacker thinks I was there, sir, it's a mistake."

"Mr. Hacker saw you——"

"Oh, no, sir! He couldn't have seen me through the door——"

"Through the door?" repeated Mr. Quelch. "What can you possibly mean, Bunter? Do you mean the gate?"

"Eh? No. You see——"

"It was at the gate that you saw Bunter, Mr. Hacker?"

"Certainly it was."

Billy Bunter blinked from one beak to the other blankly. His fat brain did not grasp this.

"This afternoon, Bunter——" resumed Mr. Quelch.

"It wasn't this afternoon, sir!" stammered Bunter. "It was yesterday——"

"Did you not say this afternoon, Mr. Hacker?"

"Certainly I did!" answered Mr. Hacker. "I was standing at the porter's lodge, and saw Bunter, and heard what he said to the others."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

It dawned on his podgy brain that it was not the cake that was being inquired after.

That was a great relief. For some reason—as yet unknown to Bunter—the beaks were inquiring into the incident at the gate that afternoon. The cake was, so to speak, a back number!

"This boy is unwilling to state what he knows," said Mr. Hacker sourly. "He prevaricated when I questioned him. Perhaps he will answer his own Form-master truthfully."

"I shall see that he does!" said Mr. Quelch icily. "I have not the slightest doubt that it will turn out a mistake of this foolish boy."

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Snort, from Hacker. Quelch did not want to take the matter up; but he had no choice, after what the master of the Shell had told him. He was, however, taking it up in his own way.

"Now, Bunter, you will answer me carefully and truthfully," said Mr. Quelch. "You have made a statement that certain boys of my Form went out of bounds on Wednesday last week. This statement I must inquire into, and either prove or disprove."

"I—I—I don't want to give chaps away, sir!" mumbled the hapless Owl.

"I—I never meant to sneak——"

"It is too late to think of that, Bunter. You have made the statement and it must be investigated. My own opinion is that you made a stupid mistake; but in any case, you will explain yourself. It appears that you followed Wharton and his friends on that half-holiday?"

"Ye-e-es, sir."

"Did you follow them to the Three Fishers?"

"I—I—I——"

"Yes or no?" rapped Mr. Quelch.

"Yes!" moaned Bunter.

Mr. Hacker's eyes glinted. This, he thought, was enough, even for Quelch.

It seemed, however, that it was not enough for Quelch. He continued to question the dismayed Owl of the Remove.

"Did you see them enter that place, Bunter?"

"They turned the corner into Oak Lane ahead of me, and——"

"Yes or no?"

"No!" gasped Bunter.

"Did you see them come out?"

"N-no!"

"Then why did you suppose that they had entered at all?"

"I—I knew they had!"

"How did you know—if you knew!"

"Well, they'd gone in when I got there!" mumbled Bunter. "If they hadn't, I should have seen them."

"That gate, I believe, faces the open common, across Oak Lane," said Mr. Quelch. "No doubt they went across the common. Did you see them afterwards, Bunter?"

"Not till they came back to the school, sir."

"Did they tell you where they had been?"

"They said they'd been over to Highcliffe, to see Courtenay."

"Oak Lane is not on the way to Highcliffe!" said Mr. Hacker sourly.

"Schoolboys, sir, on a half-holiday, might very probably ramble by a longer way!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "Did you tell Wharton and his friends that you thought they had gone out of bounds, Bunter?"

"Oh! Yes! Lots of times!"

"And what did they say?"

"They said they went round by the Three Fishers, to pull my leg!" gasped Bunter. "They made out that they knew I was following them all the time, and—and cut off across the common, and left me on the watch, for a—a—a joke on me, sir."

Mr. Quelch stared at him for a moment, and then smiled.

"A very probable explanation," he said. "No doubt they saw you, and played such a joke on you to punish you for your foolish suspicion and inquisitiveness. You are a very stupid boy, Bunter."

"Me, sir!" exclaimed Bunter, in surprise. He wondered what made Mr. Quelch think that.

"That matter is now cleared up, and it was a foolish mistake, as I firmly believed," said Mr. Quelch. "Bunter evidently saw nothing, and drew his own conclusions from his own extra-

ordinary stupidity. The statement you made, Bunter, was obviously unfounded, and you will take three hundred lines for having made it."

"Oh crikey!"

"If it should come to my knowledge, Bunter, that you have repeated such a statement, I shall cane you."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

"You may now go!" said Mr. Quelch. And Bunter went.

Mr. Hacker breathed hard. Quelch, it seemed, was satisfied. The Acid Drop was not.

"Mr. Quelch," he exclaimed, "am I to understand that you dismiss such a matter in this way?"

"You are to understand precisely that, Mr. Hacker!" answered the Remove master icily.

"Upon my word! And what I have reported to you, sir, with regard to the proceedings of those boys this afternoon—I actually ascertained that they were not skating at all—I saw one of them in bad company——"

"With regard to that, sir, I shall question the boys, in your presence, when they come in. And I have no doubt—no doubt whatever—that it will turn out to be, like this, a mistake——"

"Nothing of the kind! I——"

"A stupid mistake!" added Mr. Quelch. "I have no doubt of it—none at all! I have no more to say at present, Mr. Hacker."

Mr. Hacker left the study, almost past speech. He rustled down the passage, with his lips set like a vice.

As he turned the corner a fat squeak fell on his ears.

"I say, you fellows, that beast Hacker—that fearful old swab. Hacker—he's got me three hundred lines from Quelch! Jever hear of such a mean beast—listening to a chap who never saw him, you know, and then going and repeating it all to a chap's beak! Sneaking old swab, you know—that beast Hacker——"

Smack!

"Yaroo!"

Smack!

"Whooooop!"

Mr. Hacker swept on—leaving Billy Bunter rubbing two burning fat ears, and glaring through his spectacles with a glare that almost cracked them!

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Advice From An Expert!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. came in for calling-over in cheery spirits.

They had had quite a nice afternoon. The skating-party had been cut rather short, owing to Bessie Bunter's antics; but tea at Cliff House had been very agreeable, and they had put in some more skating on their way home.

They reached Greyfriars feeling very merry and bright, and quite unaware that anything like trouble awaited them there.

It was not till they went into Hall that they were apprised that something was up. They got the news from Billy Bunter.

"I say, you fellows, look out!" whispered the fat Owl, with a cautious blink round through his big spectacles.

"Why and wherefore, old fat man?" asked Bob.

"Quelch knows all!" said Bunter dramatically.

Billy Bunter had rather a weakness for putting things dramatically. He put that as dramatically as anything on the talkies.

Had the Famous Five played up, as



Billy Bunter's feet flew in the air as his body was reversed, and the fattest head at Greyfriars tapped on the floor. Tap! "Gurrrrgh!" gurgled Bunter. All sorts of things showered from the fat junior's pockets as he was held upside down.

it were, they should have started, or turned pale, or something of that kind. But they didn't. They only stared at the fat and mysterious Owl.

"All what?" asked Bob.

"All which?" inquired Nugent.

"I'm warning you!" explained Bunter. "Keep on your guard! Mind what you say to Quelch. I tell you, he knows all."

"Does this run in your family?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Eh? Does what run in my family?"

"Insanity."

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"Well, if you haven't gone batchy, what are you talking about?" asked Johnny.

"I'm warning you!" hooted Bunter. "Hacker heard what I said to you at the gates this afternoon, and he's told Quelch. He knows where you've been this afternoon, same as I did."

"Blessed if I see how Hacker knows anything about what we've done this afternoon," said Harry Wharton.

"I fancy he kept an eye on you!" said Bunter. "Anyhow, he knows, and he's told Quelch. Told him where you've been. So look out!"

"We don't mind Quelch knowing that we've been to tea at Cliff House," answered Harry. "Why shouldn't we?"

"He, he, he!"

"What are you cackling at, you fat frump?"

"Oh, really, Wharton! If you won't take a tip, you won't!" said Bunter. "But I heard what Hacker said to Quelch—some of it! He knows you never went skating, and he saw one of you, at least, out of bounds—in bad company" was what he said.

"Oh, my hat! Miss Primrose would be rather waxy, if she heard that!" said Bob. "There's no bad company at Cliff House! Are you making all this up, you fat ass, or has Hacker wandered in his mind?"

"I fancy he's wandered down the river, and copped you!" grinned Bunter. "You be jolly careful what you say to Quelch! I'm only warning you out of good nature. Look here, it's no good saying you were at Cliff House—you can't expect that to wash! Quelch might ring them up on the phone—and where would you be then?" They gazed at him.

"And don't try that yarn of a short cut again," advised Bunter. "It was pretty thin, anyhow, and you can't expect to get by with it a second time. Have a little sense, you know."

The Famous Five continued to gaze at him. Bunter apparently was giving them this tip out of good-nature; he had no doubt that the Famous Five had been painting the town red that afternoon.

"You'll have to say something when Quelch starts on you," went on Bunter. "You'd better think it out now before he begins. My system is to have it all ready."

"Oh, my hat!"

"That Cliff House story is no good—no good at all!" Bunter pointed out. "Quelch might ring them up, and you'd be dished. Short-cut yarns won't wash a second time. Think of something else. Look here, why not go the whole hog and say that you weren't at the Cross Keys at all? Make out that Hacker made a mistake. He's always making mistakes if you come to that. Quelch might stand by you."

"You pernicious porpoise!" said Johnny Bull.

"That's what you call gratitude, I suppose, when a fellow's taking the trouble to help you out of a scrape," said Bunter. "If you fellows take my advice, you'll say, plump and plain, that you never went to the Cross Keys at all, and stick to it through thick and thin."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Quite!" he agreed. "If we're asked

we shall certainly say that, Bunter, plump and plain, and stick to it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, it's not a laughing matter," said Bunter. "You fellows are in a bit of a fix. Still, you stick to that and you may pull through. Suppose you say you went out in a boat at Pegg—"

"Such nice weather for boating!" said Bob.

"Well, I mean to say, you'll have to say you were somewhere!" urged Bunter. "Say you found the ice was too thin for skating and you went out in a boat instead. I don't see how they'd get round that."

"But the ice was quite thick," grinned Bob.

"Quelch won't know that, and he's not likely to walk a mile to see. You can't say you went out for a spin, as Hacker saw you taking your skates. I shouldn't make it a bike spin, if I were you."

"Right!" chuckled Bob. "We won't!"

"If the ice was too thin, suppose you went for a walk on the cliffs?" suggested Bunter. "It's jolly lonely there at this time of the year, and that would account for nobody seeing you there. And the cliffs are a good distance from the Cross Keys. What about a walk on the cliffs if you don't like the boating idea?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" howled the Famous Five.

Billy Bunter was serious and earnest. But to the chums of the Remove there seemed something rather funny in this advice from an expert!

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" said Bunter. "You're jolly well for it if you can't pull Quelch's leg. Mind, he'll turn down Hacker if he can—he don't like Hacker butting in. Still, you'll have to say something. A walk on the cliffs is about the best."

"Thanks," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "You know the game, Bunter, old fat freak—you're an expert. But we're only amateurs, you know, so I think we'll stick to the Cliff House story."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, you're an ass," declared Bunter. "You won't get by with it. You'll see."

Mr. Prout came in to take the roll, and Billy Bunter, though still kindly concerned about those shady delinquents, had to leave it at that.

As they answered to their names in their turn Harry Wharton & Co. noted that Mr. Hacker's sharp eyes were on them from a distance. They had rather forgotten the Acid Drop, but after what Bunter had said they gave him their attention, and discerned the fact that Hacker was giving them his.

Why Hacker had any idea in his head that they had been out of bounds that afternoon was quite a mystery to them. It seemed that he had; but they were not feeling unduly alarmed.

"Has that old ass been keeping his jolly old eagle eye on us?" whispered Bob. "If he has, what does he fancy he's spotted?"

"The spotfulness cannot have been terrific," murmured Hurreo Jamset Ram Singh.

It was quite a puzzle.

After roll Mr. Quelch beckoned to five members of his Form to remain when the school was dismissed. Evidently something was coming.

Billy Bunter lingered.

Nothing doubting that the Famous Five had been kicking over the traces and had been copped, Bunter was quite concerned. He was prepared to place his resources as an Ananias at their disposal.

"I say, you fellows," he whispered. Bunter's whisper was of the stage variety, and though intended only for the ears of the Famous Five, was heard both by Mr. Quelch and Mr. Hacker. "I say, for goodness' sake don't stick to that Cliff House story! It's simply rotten."

"Shut up, you fat ass!" hissed Bob Cherry.

"Well, I'm only trying to help you! Either a boat or a walk on the cliffs might do all right—but that Cliff House story is simply rot—"

"Bunter!" hooted Mr. Quelch.

"Oh! Yes, sir!"

"What were you saying, Bunter?"

"Oh! Nothing, sir! I only said—"

"Go!"

Bunter went, followed by a grim frown from his Form-master. Mr. Hacker's thin lips curved sardonically.

If there had been doubt before, there was none now, in the opinion of the Acid Drop—as these young rascals, obviously, had been concocting a story to tell their Form-master!

They were going, apparently, to spin some yarn about a visit to Cliff House School, and Hacker wondered whether even Quelch could be obtuse enough to be deluded by it!

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Bumps For The Bounder!

"WHARTON!" said Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir?"

"I desire you to tell me where you and your friends have been this afternoon."

"Certainly, sir!"

"Please understand, Wharton, and all of you, that this does not imply any doubt on my part," said Mr. Quelch.

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"I am driven to question you because Mr. Hacker has an impression that you have been out of school bounds. Such is not my belief."

"Thank you, sir," said Harry. "We have not been anywhere out of bounds. We went skating on the Sark. Mr. Hacker saw us start, I think, and he must have seen that we were carrying our skates."

"Upon my word!" said Mr. Hacker. "Will you adhere to that statement, Wharton, when I tell you that I walked down the river, and that when I reached Friardale Bridge there was not a single skater to be seen on the ice?"

"I suppose you must have reached the bridge after we had gone, sir."

"You have the audacity to tell your Form-master that you went skating, but that within half an hour you had left the ice and taken your skates away with you for the afternoon?"

"Exactly, sir!" said Harry.

"I think, Mr. Quelch, that nothing could be clearer than that the skates were taken to divert attention from the real object of these boys," sneered Mr. Hacker. "The skates, if used at all, were used for less than half an hour, and carried about for the remainder of the afternoon. The facts are obvious."

"This needs some explaining, Wharton," said Mr. Quelch quietly. "No doubt you had some reason for giving up skating so soon."

"Oh, yes, sir!" answered Harry cheerfully. "Some of the Cliff House girls were skating with us—"

"Their names?" rapped Mr. Hacker.

"Marjorie Hazeldene, Clara Trevlyn, Barbara Redfern, Mabel Lynn, and Bessie Bunter," recited Wharton.

The Acid Drop bit his lip.

"We gave up skating, sir," continued Harry, addressing Mr. Quelch, "because Bessie Bunter fell over on the ice and hurt her foot. We all went back to Cliff House with her. We stayed there to tea. Mr. Hacker must have come along after we left if he did not see us on the ice. We left Cliff House again in time to get back here for roll; skating part of the way. That is all, sir."

"And who," said Hacker in a grinding voice, "was the Greyfriars junior I saw at a window of the Cross Keys?"

"Not one of us—if you saw anybody!" grunted Johnny Bull. "More likely you made a mistake."

"What! How dare you?" gasped Mr. Hacker.

"You must address Mr. Hacker more respectfully, Bull," said Mr. Quelch. "But, at the same time, I have no doubt that a mistake was made."

"No mistake was made!" hooted Mr. Hacker. "I saw the boy—having entered the place in the full knowledge that these boys were there—"

"If you saw one of us there, sir, you can give Mr. Quelch his name," said Harry. "I suppose you know our faces."

"You are well aware, Wharton, that I saw only the back of the boy's head, and that he escaped, owing to a low rascal barring my way."

"I am aware of nothing of the kind, as I was nowhere near the place," answered the captain of the Remove coolly. "If you did not see the fellow's face it might have been anybody."

"A Shell fellow, perhaps!" suggested Bob Cherry cheerily.

Mr. Hacker gave him a look. Mr. Quelch smiled.

"Some boy," said Mr. Quelch, "appears to have been out of bounds; I trust not a member of my Form. Certainly it was not one of these boys, Mr. Hacker."

"You heard, as I did, these boys con-

cocting a story with Bunter," said Mr. Hacker bitterly. "Obviously—"

"Bunter was talking nonsense, sir, as he usually is," said Harry. "He is fool enough to fancy that we went out of bounds this afternoon."

Mr. Hacker's face purpled. The Co., with difficulty, suppressed a chuckle. Wharton did not say that Mr. Hacker was a fool—only Bunter. But his meaning was as clear as need be.

"Mr. Quelch, obviously this story is concocted, and false from beginning to end!" gasped the Acid Drop. "You will, of course, put it to the test by telephoning to Cliff House and making inquiries."

"I shall, of course, do nothing of the kind, Mr. Hacker!" retorted the Remove master. "I accept the word of these boys unreservedly, and I certainly shall take no step to imply that I distrust them!"

"Then, sir, I shall do so!" hooted Hacker, his acid temper breaking out.

"I warn you, sir, to do nothing of the sort! If you intervene further in matters concerning my Form, I shall lay a complaint before Dr. Locke! I will not allow one word to be uttered at Cliff House implying distrust of these boys!" hooted back Mr. Quelch.

He made a gesture to the juniors to go.

They went.

Quelch's voice floated after them as they departed.

"One word outside this school, sir, on the subject of any boy in my Form, and the headmaster shall judge between us!"

The Famous Five smiled at one another as they went on their way. Quelch was, in the opinion of the Remove, a bit of a grim old Gorgon, but there was no doubt that he was the man to stand up for his Form.

"Henry's a jolly old brick!" murmured Bob Cherry; and his friends agreed that "Henry" was.

The chums of the Remove repaired cheerfully to the Rag. A rather less cheerful face met them at the door of that apartment. Herbert Vernon-Smith was looking—as he felt—rather uneasy.

"What on earth's up, you fellows?" he asked.

"Only Hacker playing the giddy ox," answered Bob. "He saw a man out of bounds this afternoon at the Cross Keys, and—"

"What!" gasped the Bounder. "Not to know him? Cough it up, you fat-head! Has he told Quelch who it was?"

The Famous Five looked at Smithy rather grimly. His alarm was plain enough, and they did not need telling of whose head Horace Hacker had had a back view that afternoon.

"You crummy sweep!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Has he told him?" hissed the Bounder.

"Oh, yes; he's told him!" said Bob cheerfully.

"Oh gad! Then my number's up!" muttered Vernon-Smith.

"Not quite. He told him it was one of us!" chuckled Bob.

"One of you?" The Bounder stared blankly. "I thought at the time he never saw my face. I was jolly careful and jolly quick when Lodgery tipped me the wink. But what the thump makes him think it was one of you?"

"Oh, that's what Hacker would think!" said Harry Wharton. "That's the sort of bleating goat he is! Jolly lucky for you that he does, you sweep!"

"The luckfulness is terrific, my esteemed Smith!" said Hurreo Jamset Ram Singh. "Gentlemen, chap, and

absurd sportsmen, the ludicrous and disgusting Smithy has been pub-crawling, and might have landed our ridiculous selves into a terrible row! Bump him!"

"Good egg!" agreed Bob. "Smithy, you're a disgrace to your Form, and really not fit to touch! But we'll touch you, all the same! Go it!"

"Let go, you fools!" yelled the Bounder angrily, as the Famous Five grasped him all at once. "Pll—Yaroooh!"

Bump!

"That's for going out of bounds!" said Bob. "Now give him another for mooching into a pub!"

Bump!

"Oh! Owl! Let go!" yelled Smithy. "You dummies—1—I—Ooogh!"

"And one more for luck!" said Bob. Bump!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the Famous Five walked cheerily into the Rag, leaving Herbert Vernon-Smith sitting in the passage, spluttering for breath, and fearfully exasperated, and not at all consoled by the knowledge that he deserved what he had received, and a good deal more that he had not received.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Strategie!

"PLEASE, sir—" squeaked Billy Bunter.

"What is it, Bunter?" rapped Mr. Quelch.

"Please I've left my 'Selected Poetry' in my study, sir!"

In third school, on Monday morning, English literature was the order of the day. Every fellow was supposed and expected to have his "Selected Poetry" on the spot. Bunter, it seemed, hadn't.

Mr. Quelch frowned. He did not like this kind of carelessness. And, keen as Henry Samuel Quelch was, it did not occur to him that Bunter on this occasion was not being careless, but very careful indeed.

Quelch did not know that Frank Nugent had left a bag of bullseyes in his study. Bunter did.

So, with tremendous cunning, Bunter had forgotten his book for that lesson in order to be provided with an excuse for going up to the Remove passage while the other fellows were in class.

"You may fetch your book, Bunter," snapped Mr. Quelch, "and you will take fifty lines for having forgotten it!"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. He was not quite sure whether Nugent's bullseyes were worth fifty lines.

However, there was no help for it now; and, anyhow, the way was open to Study No. 1 and the bullseyes. So Bunter rolled out of the Remove-room and trickled away to the stairs.

Bunter mounted those stairs slowly. He had no time to waste if he was going to park the bullseyes before going back to the Form-room with that forgotten book. Nevertheless, Bunter's weight required lifting, and his progress onward and upward was to slow motion.

Heaving that weight from stair to stair, Bunter became aware of a figure ahead of him, high up the staircase.

He blinked at it in surprise.

He could not see the face, of course, through the back of the head, but there was no mistaking that bony figure with its quick, jerky motion. It was Mr. Hacker who was going up.

As the Shell were in their Form-room at the same time as the Remove, Mr. Hacker, of course, should have been with them. Apparently, he had left his Form to their own devices for a time, which was unusual, and was filling in

the time with a visit to the Remove studies, which was still more unusual.

Hacker, as the surprised Owl blinked at his back, disappeared up the Remove staircase, across the landing, and into the Remove passage.

"Oh crumbs!" murmured Bunter.

He could not begin to guess what the master of the Shell wanted there, especially in lesson-time. He could hardly be after the cake that had vanished from his study days ago. The Acid Drop was a sticker, but he could scarcely be sticking to the hope of discovering any trace of the confiscated cake after such a lapse of time. So it was quite mysterious.

Bunter rolled on.

When he arrived on the Remove landing he blinked along the passage. It was empty.

Hacker had gone into that passage—he knew that. As he was not to be seen, he must have entered one of the studies.

Bunter was more and more surprised. There was something rather surreptitious about these proceedings of Hacker's. He was after something in the Remove, and he was after it at a time when no eye was likely to fall on him, class being on, and when, in fact, no eye would have fallen on him but for the lure of those bullseyes that had drawn William George Bunter out of his Form-room.

Which study he was in Bunter could not tell, but it was rather awkward for the fat Owl if he had selected Study No. 1, where the bullseyes were. Bunter did not want to grab those bullseyes under a beak's nose.

The fat Owl tiptoed along to Study No. 1 to make sure that Hacker was not there before he went in.

But a sound within the study showed that Hacker was there. Somebody was moving about in Study No. 1.

The door was shut. Had not Bunter spotted the Acid Drop en route, he would have opened that door and walked in—right into Hacker. Now he did not venture to enter; but it was fearfully annoying.

But curiosity supervened. Bunter was as inquisitive as a jackdaw. He wanted those bullseyes, but still more he wanted to know what Hacker was up to.

He applied one lens of his spectacles, and an eye behind it, to the keyhole, which was a system of investigation to which Billy Bunter was quite accustomed.

He glimpsed a bony figure in cap and gown stooping at the study table. For a moment an awful misgiving smote Bunter that Hacker was after the bullseyes.

But that really was improbable. Even Bunter realised that whatever Hacker was after, it could hardly be bullseyes.

Then he observed that the table drawer was open. Hacker was rooting into the various odds-and-ends contained therein.

It was growing—as Alice said in "Wonderland"—"curiouser and curiouser." What Hacker wanted in the table drawer in a junior study was inexplicable.

"Oh scissors! If he looks into Smithy's—" breathed Bunter, and he suppressed a giggle.

In the table drawer in Smithy's study, as Bunter knew, there were cigarettes. That was where the Bounder kept his supply of smokes. Trouble would have accrued for Herbert Vernon-Smith had they been unearthed by a beak.

Then all of a sudden it flashed into Bunter's mind. There was nothing of that kind in Harry Wharton's study, but Hacker fancied that there was.

Hacker was on the trail of the black

sheep. Firmly convinced that Harry Wharton & Co. had gone pub-crawling on Saturday, and that he had actually seen one of them in bad company, Hacker was prowling in search of proof of the shady conduct of those young rascals.

The fact that he had no official concern with Quelch's Form made no difference to the Acid Drop. He was going to demonstrate that he was right and that Quelch was wrong, and leave the Remove master no excuse for not reporting those young scoundrels to the Head.

"Not here!" Bunter, outside, heard the muttered words within. "There must be something; such boys as those, obviously—"

Bunter lost the rest as Hacker shut the drawer and moved across the study.

"Spying beast!" murmured Bunter.

Billy Bunter felt great contempt for a beast capable of spying. With his eye to the keyhole, peering in, Bunter was disgusted at the idea of spying.

But the fat Owl stepped back from the door at last. He could not go in for those bullseyes while Hacker was there, and Quelch would be expecting him back in the Form-room. In a very exasperated state of mind the fat junior rolled along to his own study—Study No. 7—and rolled in to get the volume of "Selected Poetry" which he had so carefully forgotten to take into class.

He rolled out into the passage again with the volume under his fat arm.

The door of Study No. 1 was still shut; Hacker was still there rooting about. Billy Bunter shook a fat fist at the door.

He did not care whether Hacker rooted or not, but he wanted those bullseyes. After getting fifty lines the fat Owl felt that he really was entitled to those bullseyes.

He paused outside Study No. 1. He could not, of course, grab those bullseyes under Hacker's nose; the beast was quite capable of telling Quelch. On the other hand, Hacker had no right to root about in a Remove study; and there was no doubt that he would be fearfully startled at the idea of being caught at it.

Billy Bunter gripped "Selected Poetry" in a fat hand and smacked the volume on the study door.

Bang!

Immediately the fat Owl whipped into Study No. 2 and closed the door.

As he whipped he heard a startled exclamation from Study No. 1. That sudden bang on the study door must have made Hacker jump.

That door flew open. Bunter, behind the door in Study No. 2, could not see, but he could hear.

"Who—" he heard Mr. Hacker gasp as he stared out. "What—"

Bunter grinned.

Obviously Hacker was fearfully startled.

As he saw no one in the passage he must have been puzzled, too. Bunter wondered what he would do next. If he shut the door again and carried on with the search Bunter was ready to startle him with another bang!

But Mr. Hacker did not carry on.

His peculiar proceedings were, no doubt, justifiable in his own eyes, but he could not fail to know that they would appear in quite a different light in other eyes. The bare thought of being discovered in the act of making that surreptitious search was unnerving to the Acid Drop. Bunter's bang on the door had startled him even more than the fat Owl realised.

Billy Bunter, a moment later, heard

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a hurried rustle as the master of the Shell cut out of the passage.

Blinking out of the doorway of Study No. 2, the fat Owl had a glimpse of a mortar-board disappearing down the stairs.

Hacker was gone.

Grinning, the fat junior emerged from Study No. 2 and scuttled into Study No. 1. The bag of bullseyes lay on the study table. Bunter stayed only to cram three or four into his capacious mouth, then he jammed the bag into his pocket and rolled away. He gobbled bullseyes and grinned as he took his way—not rapidly—back to the Remove form room.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Bullseyes For Bunter!

"SLAY him!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Slaughter him!"

"I say—"

"Up-end him and shake them out of him!"

"Good egg!"

"I say, you fellows, no larks, you know!" said Billy Bunter uneasily. "If you think I had those bullseyes you're making one of your silly mistakes! I never knew you had any."

After third school Billy Bunter was enjoying life—till the Famous Five ran him down in the Rag.

Bunter liked bullseyes, and there had been quite a lot in that bag. He had only had time to consume a dozen or so before returning to the Form-room—and even then Quelch had rapped at him for having been so long fetching his book. During class he had hardly ventured to chew more than four or five, Quelch having such sharp eyes. But when the Remove were dismissed the fat Owl rolled off to the Rag and set to work in earnest.

It was very irritating to be interrupted by the owner of the bullseyes and his friends before he had finished the bagful. Hastily cramming a bag back into his pocket with one hand, and drawing the back of the other across a sticky mouth, Bunter blinked at them uneasily and indignantly.

"It's pretty sickening," he said, "that a fellow can't miss a doughnut or a jam tart without starting hunting after me. I shouldn't be so jolly suspicious if I were you. It's rather low."

"You were chewing bullseyes in class!" hooted Nugent.

"And you're as sticky as a fly-paper now!" said Bob Cherry.

"And Nugent's bullseyes are gone from the study," said Harry Wharton, "and you went up for your book in Form."

"Guilty!" said Johnny Bull.

"The guiltiness is terrific," said Hurree Jamsot Ram Singh. "Let us slay the disgusting grub-raider slaughterfully."

"Hold on, you fellows!" gasped Bunter. "I—I never had the bullseyes! But I can tell you who had. I—I saw him at it."

"You fat villain, everybody else was in Form—"

"A beak can walk out of Form when he likes," said Bunter. "It was Hacker—"

"Hacker!" yelled the Famous Five.

They did not like Hacker. They were prepared to believe almost anything of Hacker. But they were not prepared to believe that even the Acid Drop raided bullseyes from a junior study. Not quite!

"I saw him!" declared Bunter. "It

was Hacker all right. When I went up for my book, you know, he was creeping—"

"Creeping?"

"Creeping into the Remove passage in a syrupstitionous way—"

"In a whatter?"

"A syrupstitionous way—frightfully syrupstitionous—"

"You blithering Owl, do you mean surreptitious?" asked Harry Wharton, staring at the fat junior.

"Stealthy!" said Bunter. "Absolutely syrupstitionous! He went into your study, old chap—"

"Hacker did?" gasped Wharton.

"Yes! I watched him through the keyhole. He was searching your study, and—and he found the bullseyes."

"He—he—he found the bullseyes!" gasped the captain of the Remove.

"And ate them!" said Bunter.

"Oh crikey!"

"I was going to tell you fellows and put you on your guard against that syrupstitionous beast!" said Bunter. "I was going to look for you and tell you as soon as I'd finished the bullseyes—"

"Great pip! As soon as you'd finished the bullseyes that Hacker ate?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, no! Yes! I—I mean, no! Not at all!" gasped Bunter. "I haven't had any bullseyes. I haven't tasted bullseyes now for weeks, and I haven't got one in my mouth now. Hacker had them. Fancy a beak, you fellows, snaffling a fellow's bullseyes—"

"Fancy!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Only fancy! It wants some fancying!"

"Mind, I watched him," said Bunter. "I didn't think he was looking in your study for smokes and things because he knows you go pub-crawling! That never entered my mind at all. I knew what he was after!"

"Smokes and things—in our study?" repeated Harry Wharton blankly. "The old ass! He can't fancy that we keep smokes there, like Smithy."

"He, he, he! You bet he does!" chuckled Bunter. "You see, he knows where you fellows went on Saturday. I warned you that that Cliff House yarn was no good, but you wouldn't take any notice."

"Look here, it's rot!" said Bob Cherry. "Even Hacker wouldn't—"

"Looks as if he did!" said Harry Wharton, knitting his brows.

"How did Bunter get hold of the bullseyes if Hacker was in the study?" said Johnny Bull.

"I didn't! Hacker had them—"

"You howling ass!"

"Oh, really, Bull! He—he was after those bullseyes, see? He—he ate them! Gobbled them—" declared Bunter. "I didn't bang on the door to startle him, or anything of that kind, and I never waited in Brownie's study till he was gone. I—I just watched him scoffing those bullseyes—"

The Famous Five exchanged wrathful glances.

They were not likely to believe the fatuous Owl's statement that Hacker had snaffled the bullseyes! But it was clear that the fat Owl had spotted him in Wharton's study during class.

"The terrific toad!" murmured Hurree Jamsot Ram Singh.

"By gum!" said Harry, with a deep breath. "I've a jolly good mind to go to Quelch!"

"I should!" said Bunter. "Don't mention that I said I saw Hacker scoffing the bullseyes, though! Quelch mightn't believe that!"

"Do you think we believe it, you fat fibbing frump?" roared Bob.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Quelch would be fearfully ratty if he

knew!" said Frank Nugent. "It's too jolly thick! Hacker's got it stuck in his silly head that we're a shady lot."

"Well, you are, ain't you?" inquired Billy Bunter, blinking at him. "I mean to say, you can't keep it up that you're pi, and all that, now it's come out about your pub-crawling, can you?"

"Oh, kill him!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Three Fishers one day, and Cross Keys the next!" said Bunter. "I must say you fellows go it pretty strong." Bunter shook his head. "If you'll take some advice from me—"

"We'll take the bullseyes instead!" said Nugent. "Hand them over, you burglarious bloater!"

"Oh, really, Nugent, I've told you that Hacker— Leggo! I say, you fellows, leggo, you beasts! I haven't eaten any of those bullseyes, and I haven't got the rest in my pockets! Yarooop!"

Five pairs of hands jerked the fat Owl of the Remove off his feet. The walls of the Rag swam round Bunter as he was reversed in the grip of those hands.

His feet flew in the air and the fattest head at Greyfriars tapped on the floor.

Tap!

"Gurrrrrggh!" gurgled Bunter.

Tap!

"Urrgggh!"

All sorts of things showered from Bunter's pockets as he was held upside down! Among other things, a bag of bullseyes shot out!

"Urrgh! Gurggh! Leggo!" wailed Bunter. "I say—woooogh! Leggo! Ooogh!"

The Famous Five let go, and Bunter rolled. Frank Nugent picked up the bag of bullseyes. There had been some dozens in it originally. Now there were eight or nine.

"Groooogh!" gasped Bunter, as he sat dizzily up. "Beasts! You nearly made me swallow that beastly bullseye—groooogh!"

"The one you hadn't got in your mouth?" asked Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, here they are!" said Frank Nugent, laughing. "Bunter's had nearly all of them, and he may as well have the rest. Hold his neck!"

"I say!" yelled Bunter, in alarm. "I say, you fellows—if you shove those bullseyes down my neck, I'll—gurrrrrggh!"

The fat Owl wriggled frantically as the bullseyes were dropped between his collar and his fat neck.

Bunter liked bullseyes going down the inside of that fat neck—outside they felt quite unpleasant! But it was outside that he got them, to the last one; and Nugent crammed down the sticky bag after the last of them!

After which, the Famous Five walked out of the Rag—leaving Billy Bunter wriggling like a fat eel, and feeling horribly sticky, and wishing from the bottom of his fat heart that he had never snaffled those bullseyes!

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

Making Hacker Happy!

BOB CHERRY burst into a sudden chuckle.

After class that day, the Famous Five were walking in the quad, when Bob sighted a bony face and a pair of sharp eyes in the distance—turned towards them.

The sight of Horace Hacker brought a frown to Harry Wharton's face. The captain of the Remove was deeply and intensely exasperated by what he had



"All hands on deck!" shouted Bob Cherry, as he backed the horse with a firm hand. Even with five strong and willing helpers, the task was not easy. But slowly and surely, the laden cart was pushed back from the edge of the ditch, and the muddy horse after it.

learned that morning. Hacker's face reminded him of it.

Bob, on the other hand, seemed exhilarated.

"The jolly old Acid Drop has got his jolly old eye on us!" he remarked.

Grunt, from Johnny Bull.

"I expect the old ass fancies that we've got our pockets stuffed with fags," he said, "and a racing paper or two! I dare say he would like to make us turn them out if he could."

"Exactly!" said Bob. "And why shouldn't Hacker be given a little pleasure, if that's the sort of thing that makes him happy? I've got a wheeze."

Bob chuckled again explosively.

"Where's your minor, Franky?" he asked.

"What the thump do you want my minor for?" asked Nugent.

"Because he's in the Second Form."

"Eh?"

"I want his pal, Gatty, too."

"Why?"

"Because he's in the Second Form!" answered Bob affably.

Bob Cherry's chums came to a halt and gazed at him. This sounded to them as if Robert Cherry was wandering in his mind.

"Mad?" asked Johnny Bull.

"No! I fancy Hacker's going to be mad—mad as a hatter! I've got a bag of jam tarts in my study," went on Bob.

"What do you fellows think would happen if I told young Nugent and Gatty that they could go there and scoff them?"

"They'd go there and scoff them, like a dog after a bone!" said Harry Wharton. "But what the thump—"

"Exactly!" said Bob again. "And that's how we're going to make Hacker happy. Come and root out those fags."

In utter wonder, Bob's chums followed him in search of Dicky Nugent and George Gatty of the Second Form.

Those two youths were discovered outside the school shop. They were both going through their pockets, apparently in hope of discovering coins that were not there.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, you men!" greeted Bob. "Like some jam tarts?"

Nugent minor and his pal stared round.

"What do you think?" was Dicky Nugent's answer.

"Sort of!" agreed Gatty.

"I've got a bag in my study!" said Bob.

"Honest Injun?" asked Dicky Nugent doubtfully, while Gatty stared. Generous offers like this did not often come the way of the heroes of the Second.

"Honour bright!" declared Bob. "Six of them, jolly and juicy! I don't want them, and you kids—I mean you men—can have them!"

"What-ho!" said Dicky Nugent and Gatty together.

They lost no time. If jam tarts were going in a Remove study, free, gratis, and for nothing, Nugent minor and Gatty were on. They scuttled off to the House at a rapid run.

"What the merry dickens—" said Nugent.

"Come on!" said Bob.

His chums followed him to the House, quite mystified. Bob's ruddy face was wreathed in grins; but his friends, so far, saw nothing to grin at. At the door he halted.

"Wait for me here!" he said.

"All right! But what—"

"Just wait!" said Bob, and he cut into the House, leaving his perplexed friends waiting. Unless Bob Cherry was off his rocker, the Co. could not begin to understand what all this could possibly mean.

Bob scudded up the Remove staircase. He overtook the two fags at the door of Study No. 13.

"Trot in!" he said cheerily.

Two fellows were in the study: Mark Linley, working at a Greek exercise, and little Wan Lung, curled up in the arm-chair.

Both looked round at Bob as he came in with the fags.

"I've asked these chaps in for a spot of a spread!" explained Bob. "Here you are, my pippins."

He lifted a bag of jam tarts from the study cupboard.

Nugent minor and Gatty eyed it with pleasurable anticipation. Why Bob Cherry was standing them tarts was quite a mystery to them, but it was quite an agreeable mystery. They liked jam tarts.

"Now, look here, you kids—" said Bob.

"Us what?" asked Richard Nugent.

"I mean, you men!" amended Bob.

"Look here, you men, I want you to stick in this study for a quarter of an hour."

"It won't take us a quarter of an hour to scoff those tarts!" said Gatty, staring. "Five minutes, if you like."

"Make it fifteen!" said Bob firmly. "Otherwise you don't get the tarts, see! It won't hurt you to sit in this study, in such good company, for a quarter of an hour. Never mind why, but it's rather special. When you've got through the tarts, Marky will teach you some Greek to fill up time, if you like."

Mark Linley laughed.

"We'll stick here a quarter of an hour, if you like," said Nugent minor. "But if Linley begins any Greek on me, I'll shy the inkpot at him!"

"Well, stick here, anyhow, till I come back!" said Bob. "Mind, honest injun?"

"Honest Injun!" agreed the fags; puzzled, but willing to oblige—in view of the bag of tarts.

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"Right, then!"

Bob left the study; and the two fags rounced immediately on the tarts.

Bob, grinning cheerily, out down the stairs, and rejoined his chums outside the House.

"Oh, here you are!" said Harry.

"Now, what the thump—"

"Come on!" said Bob. "We've got to walk past Hacker—"

"What on earth for?" hooted Johnny Bull.

"Didn't I tell you it was a wheeze?"

"Blessed if I can see it, then? What the thump are we going to walk past that gargoyle for?"

"So that he can hear me speak to you."

"But what—" howled Nugent.

"Only don't look at him! We're not supposed to see him, or to know that he's the kind of sweep to catch on to what a fellow might be saying! He's got to hear me entirely by accident."

"Oh, all right!" said Harry resignedly. "I suppose you're not potty, as you say you're not! Come on, then!"

The Famous Five proceeded to saunter in the quad. They played up, to back up Bob Cherry's mysterious wheeze, whatever it was.

Mr. Hacker was walking to and fro by the leafless old elms, taking a spot of exercise after classes. His eyes glinted round, more than once, at Harry Wharton & Co. He was keenly—and not amiably—interested in those cheery youths. They did not seem to notice him, or see him at all, as they came along by the elms.

"Got a match?" asked Bob suddenly.

"A match! No!" answered Harry, astonished by the question.

Bob Cherry could not possibly want a match, out of doors. The only use for a match, out of doors, was to light a cigarette. True, there were dingy fellows who sometimes skulked out of sight behind those elms for the very purpose of smoking a surreptitious cigarette! Bob, of course, was not one of them.

But Mr. Hacker, as he caught Bob's voice with his sharp ears, gave a little start! His lips set, and his eyes glinted watchfully.

Bob ran his hands through his pockets, as if in search of something.

"Oh dear!" he exclaimed.

"What's wrong, old chap?" asked Johnny Bull. "Left your money in the study? Very careless if you have, I must say!"

"Lost something?" asked Harry.

"No; but I've left the fags in my study."

Those words floated, distinctly, to Horace Hacker's sharp ears, as the Famous Five walked on.

"Don't look round!" murmured Bob.

"And for goodness' sake, don't cackle! Let Hacker chew on that—and wait!"

"Oh, my hat!" breathed Wharton.

The Co. caught on, now; and it was with difficulty that they repressed a chuckle. They walked on—still unconscious of Hacker! Not till they were at quite a little distance did they change their direction, so that they could glance back, not too obviously.

"Oh!" gasped Bob. "Look!"

Horace Hacker's bony figure was crossing to the House at a very rapid walk. His back was to the juniors now, so it was safe to grin! They grinned—widely!

"Oh, holy smoke!" gurgled Johnny Bull. "Hacker's on!"

"There are fags—and fags!" murmured Bob. "Second Form men are fags—and cigarettes are fags! Which kind of fags do you think Hacker thought I meant!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was only too clear what sort of fags Mr. Hacker thought Bob meant!

He had heard Bob ask for a match and then state that he had left the fags in his study! What was Horace Hacker to think?

Obviously, Mr. Hacker did not dream that Bob had been alluding to the kind of fags that Mr. Twigg taught in the Second Form! He believed that Bob had been alluding to the kind of fags tobaccoists sold in packets! Really, he could hardly think anything else!

Mr. Hacker fairly shot into the House! And the Famous Five, almost doubled up with merriment, gurgled as he shot!

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

Fags—And Fags!

"CHERRY!"

"Oh! Yes, sir!" gasped Bob.

Mr. Quelch's study window had suddenly shot open. The Remove master leaned out, scanning the quad.

Spotting the Famous Five, in the distance, he beckoned to them; and they came up to the window, wondering what he wanted. He rapped out Bob's name like a bullet.

"Come into the House at once, Cherry!" rapped Mr. Quelch. "Come to my study! I forbid you to go to your own before you come here."

"Yes, sir!" stuttered Bob. "Certainly."

For a moment he was amazed. Then, through the open window, he discerned the bony figure and acid face of Mr. Hacker in his Form-master's study. And then he understood.

"Oh crikey!" gurgled Bob, as he turned to go along to the door. "Come on, you fellows, this is richer than I expected."

"The richness is terrific!" gasped Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Oh dear!" murmured Harry Wharton. "Has Hacker really been as enough—goat enough—idiot enough—to call Quelch in?"

"Has he not?" gurgled Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Famous Five almost wept as they went. Bob's jape on Hacker was working out to unlooked-for dimensions.

The idea had been to send the prying Acid Drop scudding up to Study No. 13 in search of those fags—only to discover that the fags were two of Mr. Twigg's cheery pupils. But that, it seemed, was not enough for Hacker!

Knowing, as he did now, that Bob Cherry had left cigarettes in his study, Hacker had promptly informed Bob's Form-master of the fact, to make sure that Quelch discovered those fags before they could be removed or hidden! Even Quelch could not doubt when he saw the fags with his own eyes!

It was really excruciating to Bob and his chums! They chuckled and chortled, gurgled and gasped, as they made their way into the House.

It was not easy to assume a proper gravity when they reached Mr. Quelch's study. However, they made a tremendous effort and banished the smiles from their faces, as they arrived there.

Quelch and Hacker were in the doorway. Hacker's face was bitterly set—Quelch's puzzled and annoyed.

"I did not tell all of you to come!" rapped Mr. Quelch, as the Famous Five arrived in a body.

"I have no doubt that they were all concerned in it!" said Mr. Hacker sourly. "Cherry was addressing them generally when he said that he had left his cigarettes in his study."

"I did, sir?" exclaimed Bob.

"Probably you were unaware that your words reached my ears!" sneered Mr. Hacker. "I may tell you, Cherry, that I was walking by the elms when you passed with your friends, and heard what you said to them."

"You never heard me say anything about cigarettes, sir!" answered Bob. "I certainly never used the word."

"You deny it, Cherry!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"I do, sir, and my friends will bear me out!"

"This is extraordinary," said Mr. Quelch. "Are you quite sure, Mr. Hacker, that you actually heard the boy utter the word 'cigarettes'?"

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"The boy is deliberately prevaricating!" answered Mr. Hacker. "He did not use the word cigarettes, but a slang word of the same meaning. His actual words were, that he had left the fags in his study."

"It is quite immaterial what word he used—it is the fact we have to ascertain!" said Mr. Quelch, frowning. "Cherry, I shall proceed to your study at once, and if cigarettes are found there, you will be taken to your headmaster. Follow me!"

Mr. Quelch rustled away, accompanied by Hacker. Behind their majestic backs, Bob bestowed a cheery wink on his chums, and followed.

The Co. followed Bob. They were not going to miss the discovery in Study No. 13!

"Anything, up, you fellows?" asked Peter Todd, meeting them on the stairs.

"Yes—fags in my study!" answered Bob cheerily. "Hacker's spotted it, and put Quelch wise."

"You're for it, then, you awful ass!" said Peter, staring.

"Not quite! Follow on, and see the fun."

Peter Todd followed on. As the procession moved up the Remove passage, other fellows followed on; the Bounder, Redwing, Hazeldene, Ogilvy, Skinner, and several more—all curious to know what was up.

"I say, you fellows, what's on?" squeaked Billy Bunter, blinking out of Study No. 7 as the procession passed.

"Fags in Cherry's study!" chuckled Skinner.

"Oh crikey! Have they spotted you, Bob?" asked Bunter breathlessly. "Well, you really might expect it, you know, the way you go on! He, he, he!" And the fat Owl rolled out to join the increasing crowd.

The two masters reached Study No. 13, the Famous Five behind them, and half the Remove behind the Famous Five. From one fellow to another passed the thrilling whisper that fags had been spotted in Cherry's study—by Hacker, who had reported the same to Quelch! Excitement was getting quite breathless.

The door of Study No. 13 was half-open. A voice from within floated out to the two beaks as they arrived; the voice of Richard Nugent, of the Second Form.

"Time that fathead Cherry was back, if he's coming in a quarter of an hour! It's jolly near—"

"Three more minutes—" said Gatty.

"Oh, he's coming! Look here, Cherry—" Richard Nugent broke off as the door was pushed open and, instead of the expected Remove two Form-masters entered together.

The four occupants of Study No. 13 jumped to their feet at once. Nugent minor, George Gatty, Mark Linley, and Wun Lung surveyed the unexpected visitors in great surprise.

Outside the study stood Harry Wharton & Co.—the passage behind them packed.

Mr. Quelch's gimlet eyes swept round the study. On the table were Mark Linley's Greek books, and a sticky bag that had contained jam tarts. Smokes, if any, were not visible.

"Cherry! You may enter!" said Mr. Quelch.

Bob entered.

"If you have cigarettes in this study, point them out at once!"

"I haven't, sir!" said Bob meekly.

"Cigarettes!" exclaimed Mark Linley in indignant surprise. "Cherry has nothing of the kind, sir! I should know, if he had, and he certainly has not."

"Ole Bob Chelly no smokee, sir!" said Wun Lung, equally surprised.

"I am sure of it!" said Mr. Quelch. "I am sure that Cherry is the very last boy in my Form to have deluded me in such a way. You may be assured of that, Cherry! Nevertheless, in view of what Mr. Hacker believes that he heard you say—"

"I presume, sir, that I can believe what I heard with the greatest distinctness," said Hacker sourly. "Cherry asked his companions, first, for a match—"

"Yes, that's so!" agreed Bob. "I did!"

"Perhaps you will tell your Form-master why you required a match out of doors!" sneered the Acid Drop.

"I don't suppose Mr. Quelch is interested, sir."

"I think you had better tell me, Cherry!" said Mr. Quelch.

"Oh, certainly, sir! We're going to have tea in Wharton's study and, of course, we're going to light the fire there in this cold weather, sir! I shall want a match to put to the fire!" said Bob artlessly.

Snort from Mr. Hacker.

"Such palpable prevarication!" he said scornfully. "Mr. Quelch, Cherry stated in the plainest terms that he had left his cigarettes in this study—"

"Oh, no, sir! I said I'd left the fags here!" interrupted Bob.

"Do not bandy words with me, Cherry! Whatever you choose to call them, you said that you had left them here. Mr. Quelch, as Cherry has not entered the study since till now, they must be still here. That is obvious! Proof is in your hands, if you choose to look for it."

"I scarcely understand you, Cherry!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "You have denied that you said you had left cigarettes in your study—"

"Certainly, sir."

"Cherry never said anything about cigarettes, sir!" said Harry Wharton.

"Never mentioned the word!" said Johnny Bull.

"It is immaterial what word was used! Cherry, do you now admit that you said that you had left the fags, as you choose to call them, in this study?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"Oh, yes, sir!"

"Upon my word! I am surprised—shocked! Show me at once where they are concealed, Cherry!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"They're not concealed at all, sir!" said Bob. "I asked them here—"

"You asked them here—" stuttered Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir."

"Are you in your right senses, Cherry? What do you mean by saying that you asked cigarettes here?" shrieked Mr. Quelch.

"Not cigarettes, sir—fags!" said Bob. "There's no rule against asking fags to a fellow's study, is there, sir? Especially when one of them is my pal's young brother."

"Wha-a-t?"

"I had some jam tarts, sir!" exclaimed Bob innocently. "I asked the fags here for that, sir! They will tell you the same."

"The—the—the fags!" stuttered Mr. Quelch.

"Nugent minor and Gatty, sir!"

"N-N-Nugent, mum-mum-minor and G-G-G-Gatty!" Mr. Quelch seemed afflicted with a bad stutter. "Are—are N-N-Nugent m-m-minor and G-G-G-Gatty the—the fuf-fuf-fags of which—I mean of whom—you were speaking when Mr. Hacker overheard you?"

"Yes, sir! I mentioned to my friends that I'd left them in my study!" said

Bob, with the cheerful innocence of a babe in the wood. "I left them here eating the tarts!"

"Bless my soul!"

There was a brief spot of silence. Mr. Quelch gazed blankly at Bob's innocent face; Hacker's bony countenance was really extraordinary in its expression. But the silence was brief! It was broken by a yell from the crowded passage.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Famous Five tried to remain serious. But they couldn't! They had to join in that yell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

In the study Mark Linley was laughing, too, and little Wun Lung curled up with glee. Nugent minor and George Gatty howled. They were able to guess now why Bob had stood them those tarts and stipulated that they should remain in the study till he came back! They howled and gurgled. From the passage came roar on roar.

"Fags!" yelled Smithy. "Fags in the study. Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows," came a fat squeak. "They've been pulling the Acid Drop's leg! He, he, he!"

"Oh crumbs! Fags!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Upon my word!" Mr. Quelch found his voice at last. "Silence, please! Silence! This is absurd—ridiculous—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I hope, sir, that there's no harm in leaving these fags in my study, one of them being Nugent's young brother," said Bob.

"No, no! Certainly not! No harm whatever!" gasped Mr. Quelch. "It is a ridiculous mistake—an absurd error—a grotesque mistake—absolutely grotesque! Mr. Hacker, you have brought me here on a fool's errand. Have you anything more to say, sir?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch in great exasperation.

"I—I—I—" stammered the unhappy Acid Drop. Even the suspicious Hacker had to realise what an utter and gorgeous fool he had made of himself. His voice failed him.

"It is absurd!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "You have wasted my time, and your own! You have made a ridiculous and unfounded accusation against a Remove boy, and it proves to be nothing more than a grotesque misunderstanding of a word in common use!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" echoed along the Remove passage.

"Understand this, Mr. Hacker!" rapped Mr. Quelch. "I will listen to nothing further from you with regard to boys of my Form! Your next absurd mistake, sir, may be taken to the headmaster—I will not give it a hearing!"

And Mr. Quelch, intensely irritated and annoyed, swept from the study.

Mr. Hacker followed him, with a burning face. He made his way through a yelling crowd of Removees. Loud laughter accompanied him down the passage, and followed him down the stairs. Laughing faces lined the banisters, watching his mortar-board disappearing below.

Bob Cherry wiped his eyes.

"I don't know whether Hacker still thinks we're a smoky lot!" he gasped. "But I'll bet that he doesn't hunt for fags in my study again—especially with Quelch in tow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the Famous Five, almost weeping, went along to Study No. 1 to tea. The Acid Drop was a sticker; but it was probable that he was fed-up, at least, with hunting for fags in Remove studies!

THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER.

Good Samaritans!

"**W**E'RE not standing this!" said Harry Wharton, with a flash in his eyes.

"Oh, what's the odds so long as Hacker's 'appy?" said Bob Cherry tolerantly.

Bob's sunny good temper was proof against even the Acid Drop.

Still, it was irritating.

It was, in fact, exasperating to five fellows who really had nothing of a serious nature on their youthful consciences.

Wednesday afternoon, a half-holiday, should have been devoted to football. But heavy rain had put paid to that. The rain, luckily, had cleared off in the afternoon, and, though there was plenty of wet about, the chums of the Remove had started on a walk down to Friar-dale.

Really and truly their intentions were quite harmless and above board. They were going to walk down to the village, drop in at Uncle Clegg's for some of Mr. Clegg's well-known baked chestnuts, and walk back to the school. Merely that and nothing more.

As it happened, they came on old Coote, the carrier, in Friardale Lane. They stopped for a few friendly words with the ancient carrier, and that was how they happened to glance back and spot a bony figure astern.

They walked on, aware that Mr. Hacker was behind.

Possibly, of course, the Acid Drop was merely walking down to the village, as the juniors were. Possibly it was only a coincidence that he was walking down just after them. But they did not think so.

In fact, they had not the slightest doubt that the suspicious Acid Drop was keeping an eye on them—probably certain, in his own mind, that they were heading for the Cross Keys. The weather was not exactly inviting for a walk, and few fellows had gone out. No doubt Hacker concluded that they had their reasons for doing so—apart from a desire for fresh air and exercise!

"It's getting too jolly thick!" growled Johnny Bull. "Hacker's practically spying on us, like Bunter did."

"The thickfulness is getting terrific," remarked Hurree Janset Ram Singh. "But what cannot be cured must go longest to the well, as the English proverb observes."

"I've a jolly good mind—" said Harry, setting his lips.

"My dear chap, it's all right," said Bob. "It makes Hacker happy and it doesn't hurt us. When he's trailed us down to Uncle Clegg's we'll offer him some of the baked chestnuts and soften his stony heart."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Dismal old ass!" said Johnny Bull. "No bizney of his to look after Quelch's Forn. Quelch has told him so plainly enough."

"He wants to prove that he's right," grinned Bob. "If he could watch us nipping into the Cross Keys he would hike off with the news, as happy as a sandboy. Pity we can't oblige him!"

"Gloomy old goat!" said Nugent.

"I've a jolly good mind to turn back and ask him what the dickens he wants!" said Harry Wharton.

"Well, we can't prove that he's after us!" said Bob. "He has a right to walk in our saintly footsteps, like the page after Good King Wenceslas, if he likes. Besides, I've got a better idea. Wait till we get round the turn of the lane."

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"No good letting him hear you talk about fags in the study!" grinned Nugent. "Even Hacker can't be caught twice with the same chaff!"

"No; but if we dodge through the hedge what will he think? Will he think that we've gone for a stroll in fields a foot thick with mud, or that we've cut on at a run to get to the Cross Keys?"

"That's an easy one!" Harry Wharton laughed. "Let's!"

There was a sharp turn in the winding lane ahead. Having passed round it, the juniors were out of sight of the Acid Drop.

As soon as the winding hedge hid them they darted, one after another, through a gap and scuttled behind the hedge.

There they waited and watched!

A minute later a bony figure came at a quick walk round the curve. Watching through the hedge, they saw Mr. Hacker stare along the lane, his eyebrows lifting in surprise.

Obviously he had expected to see the juniors ahead of him as he came round the bend. He saw only an empty lane.

For a moment he stared; then he broke into a run.

With considerable amusement, the Famous Five watched him. Form-masters seldom ran; but Mr. Hacker was running quite hard, evidently to regain sight of the juniors whom he believed to be still ahead of him.

He disappeared round the next bend of the lane, going strong.

As soon as he was out of sight the Famous Five emerged, chuckling, into Friardale Lane again.

"Dear man!" said Bob cheerily. "We've given him a run for his money!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If he doesn't sight us ahead—which isn't really likely, as we're behind—he will know that we've dodged into the Cross Keys—"

"The knowfulness will be terrific!"

"Might hang on to watch us come out, as Bunter did the other day at the Three Fishers!" said Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Co. yelled at the idea. It was rather rotten weather for a man to hang about on the watch. They wished Hacker joy of it if he did.

"We won't spoil his pleasure by going on and letting him see us again," added Bob. "We're only out for a walk and we can go the other way—what?"

"Hear, hear!" grinned Johnny Bull.

And the Famous Five, instead of going on to the village, as they had intended, which would have brought them under Hacker's view if he were hanging about, turned back and walked towards the school again.

But they were still some distance short of Greyfriars when they sighted old Coote once more. The Friardale carrier was at a halt and apparently in trouble.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "This is where we rally round, old beans! Who minds a little mud?"

"Well, I do rather," answered Harry. "But we'll lend the old bean a hand, all the same."

Old Coote needed a hand—in fact, more than one! It was rather a fortunate circumstance for the ancient gentleman that the juniors had turned back, for the lane was otherwise quite solitary and there was no other help.

The carrier's horse had slipped over the side of the ditch. The cart backed towards the road and the horse struggled wildly but vainly, kicking up mud and half-melted snow. Old Coote, dragging on the reins, was trying to extricate the animal; but he had not the

remotest chance of doing so. Much more strength than Mr. Coote possessed was required.

The juniors came up at a run. Old Coote ceased his efforts and blinked round at them as they stopped.

"Look at that 'orse!" he said pathetically. "Stuck in that there ditch, he is! Look at 'im! And I got my round to do afore dark! And nobody to 'elp!"

"Are you calling us nobodies?" demanded Bob.

Old Coote blinked at him.

"You can't 'elp!" he said. "You'll get smothered with mud and spoil your clothes. What would your schoolmaster say?"

"Never mind that," said Bob. "We've got to back that bus out of the ditch somehow. Any chap who's afraid of a spot of mud can sit down and watch."

"It won't be a spot!" said Nugent. "But go it!"

"The spotfulness will be terrific," murmured Hurree Janset Ram Singh. "But the helpfulness of the esteemed Coote is the proper career. Let us act Good-Samaritanfully."

"All hands on deck!" said Bob.

It was not a nice task. It was, in fact, a very nasty one. But the Famous Five were good-natured and always ready to help a lame dog over a stile, and more than ready to place their happy, youthful strength and activity at the service of a frail old man.

Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent gripped a wheel on one side, and Johnny Bull and the nabob gripped a wheel on the other, to revolve them backward. Bob, regardless of mud, plunged to the horse's head to back him after the cart. Old Coote, who really was of no use to help, looked on, grateful for the timely assistance, but horrified at the mud-bespattered state of the Greyfriars fellows.

Even with five strong and willing helpers the task was not easy. But the heavy wheels revolved backward under a steady tug, and Bob backed the horse with a firm hand. Slowly but surely the laden cart was pushed back from the edge of the ditch, and the muddy horse after it.

All the juniors were nearly as muddy as the horse, and gasping for breath, and, like the Village Blacksmith, their brows were wet with honest sweat by the time the horse and cart were righted and safe in the middle of the lane.

Old Coote bubbled with gratitude.

"I don't know 'ow to thank you, young gentlemen," he said. "There I was stook, unless somebody came by to 'elp, and nobody came except you young gents! But look at your clothes!"

Bob looked down at his clothes and made a grimace.

"I think, you chaps," he said, "that we'll give up that walk and go in and get a wash and brush-up—what?"

"The thinkfulness is terrific!" grinned Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

And the Famous Five, leaving old Coote leading his horse, cut off to the school at a trot, quite satisfied at having played the part of Good Samaritans, but chiefly anxious to get some of the mud off.

THE TWENTIETH CHAPTER.

Backed, Five To One!

"**I** SAY, you fellows—"

"Buzz off, bloater!"

"But I say, where have you been?" asked Bunter.

Bunter, as usual, wanted to know.

Harry Wharton & Co. had had their wash and their brush-up! They had

needed quite a lot of washing, and quite a lot of brushing-up, and it had taken some time. After which they did not feel disposed for much more exertion, so they sauntered in the quad till tea-time—with an eye on the gates.

They were rather interested in Hacker. They were curious to see him, when he came in. If he had, as was quite probable, been watching the Cross Keys for them, it would be entertaining to see his face when he came in and passed them in the Greyfriars quad.

Possibly he would realise that he had been on a false scent! Probably he would suspect that they had cut out of that dingy pub by a back way, and so eluded him! There really was no telling what the Acid Drop might or might not think—and the chums of the Remove did not care very much. Still, it would be interesting to see his face when he came in; so, as they sauntered, they kept an eye open, in the direction of the gates.

Bunter, and the delights of his conversation, were not required—especially as Hacker's bony form appeared in the gateway, as the fat Owl joined them.

The juniors did not look at Mr. Hacker! They observed him out of the corner of their eyes, as it were!

Thus they observed that his glinting eyes turned on them in a fixed stare. He came in slowly, his eyes still on them.

Billy Bunter did not see Hacker! His range of vision was too limited! Besides, his attention was given to the Famous Five. Bunter had his suspicions—and Bunter wanted to know!

"I jolly well know where you've been!" asserted the fat Owl. "I saw the way you went—"

"Then why ask, old fat man?" said Bob.

"I saw you come in, all muddy!" went on Bunter. "I say, you fellows, did you get into a shindy at the Cross Keys, or what? You were fearfully muddy."

"Kick him!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Hold on!" murmured Bob. His eyes danced. "Don't look round, you men! Look here, Franky, you said that Hacker couldn't be caught twice with the same chaff! Perhaps he couldn't—but what about a different brand of chaff?"

"What the dickens—"

"Mind you don't look round."

"Oh, all right!"

Mr. Hacker, coming on, had his eyes on the group. He would soon be passing them.

When he passed, he would hear them. They knew his ways! They did not need telling that his sharp ears would be on the strain when he passed within hearing.

Apparently some wheeze had occurred to Bob's fertile brain, to judge by the glimmer in his blue eyes. His friends were only too ready to play up, whatever it was. Billy Bunter, unconsciously, was lending aid.

"What are you fellows talking about?" squeaked the fat Owl. "Look here, I jolly well know! I say, I shouldn't wonder if you've been spotted again—I can jolly well tell you that Hacker went out soon after you did!"

"Not really?" asked Bob.

"He jolly well did!" declared Bunter. "I saw him! I say, if he's copped you again, you won't get off so easily this time! You can't tell that Cliff House story twice, you know. I say, what have you been doing? You can tell a pal."

"Backing a horse!" answered Bob Cherry.

"Oh crikey!"

Bob's friends stared at him for a moment. Then they grinned.

Bob's statement was strictly accurate! They had been backing a horse—old Coote's horse—out of the ditch! They wondered, with suppressed glee, whether the Acid Drop would fall for this, as he had fallen for the fags in the study! He was in hearing now; and, without looking round, they knew that he was slowing down.

"I say, you fellows, have you really been backing a horse?" exclaimed Billy Bunter, in breathless excitement.

"Five to one!" answered Bob. "What do you think of that, old fat man? We've backed that horse, five to one."

"I say, that's jolly long odds!" gasped Bunter. Bunter, naturally, did not know that Bob was alluding to five juniors and one carrier's horse. Really, a brighter fellow than Bunter would never have guessed that one! "I say, he won't win, if you got five to one."

"Well, he's a good horse!" said Bob.

OVERSEAS PALS WIN PRIZES! August "FOOTER STAMPS" Result.

PRIZES OF FIVE SHILLINGS EACH have been awarded and sent to the following twenty-four competitors who all submitted entries with scores of 34 "goals" and over:

V. Abrahams, 33, Somerset Road, Capetown, South Africa.

J. P. Bloom, P.O. Dekmore, Transvaal, South Africa.

Clyde Butler, 3, Carlton Terrace, St. Bedes Road, Three Anchor Bay, Capetown, South Africa.

R. Carrapiett, 18, Sandwith Road, Rangoon, Burma.

Douglas C. Cassingham, Invicta, Wexford Road, Jurgon's Estate Gardens, Capetown, South Africa.

Low Meng Chim, 3, Gentle Road, Singapore, S.S.

Willie Chormous, 1124, Alfred Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.

Peter Claassen, P.O. Box 64, Oudtshoorn, Cape Province, South Africa.

David S. T. Eng, 1830, Nibong Road, Teluk Anson, Perak, F.M.S.

W. D. Forssman, 498, Lutig Street, Pretoria, South Africa.

Ian Gibson, 11, Liverpool Street, Epsom, Auckland, New Zealand.

"Oh, yes, he's a good horse!" said Harry Wharton, with a nod. "I'm jolly glad we backed him."

"The gladfulness is terrific!" declared Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

The Acid Drop, passing the group, slowed and slowed.

Still the innocent juniors did not observe him! They seemed quite oblivious of Hacker, and the fact that he was drinking in every word.

"But I say, how did you know about the horse?" asked the eager Owl.

"Five to one is jolly good odds, if he's any good. Did you get a tip?"

"Well, you see, we know about the horse—he's owned locally!" explained Bob Cherry. "Belongs to a Friardale man, so, of course, we knew what we were about."

"Yea, rather!" agreed Nugent. "Best day's work we ever did, backing that horse."

"I say, you might have put a bob on for me, while you were about it," said Bunter reproachfully. "It would have been pally. Five to one would mean

five bob, and I could do with it, you know—I've been disappointed about a postal order."

"Oh, you're no good at that sort of thing!" said Bob. "Besides, you're so jolly particular! You'd have thought it dirty work, very likely."

"Well, so it was!" said Bunter. "Jolly dirty work, if you ask me—going into a pub and backing horses! Still, a fellow might stretch a point at times. I don't see why I shouldn't back the horse, if you fellows did."

"Lots of things you don't see, old fat man!" Bob Cherry chuckled softly. "He's taken it in," he murmured.

Mr. Hacker had passed—at last! He was out of hearing again, and going on to the House.

The Famous Five gazed after him—joyously! Had Hacker fallen for it? The young rascals could not help hoping that he had!

Bunter blinked in the same direction, and jumped.

Abdul Hamid, 109-101st Street, Kandawgalay Post, Rangoon, Burma.

William Hunneybun, 473, Frome Road, University P.O., Rangoon, Burma.

Harold Jones, 8, Wesley Street, Observatory, Capetown, South Africa.

J. W. Lake, Wartburg, Natal, South Africa.

E. Louw, 78, Strubens Road, Mowbray, Capetown, South Africa.

Sam McCoy, 11, Dean Street, London, Ontario, Canada.

J. Meyersohn, 24, York Street, Berca, Johannesburg, South Africa.

E. J. Painting, P.O. Box 429, Bulawayo, S. Rhodesia, South Africa.

Tan Hooi Piang, Jubilee School, Klang, Selangor, F.M.S.

Neville Robertson, Box 111, Nkana, N. Rhodesia, South Africa.

Chew Beng Song, 139A, Tanjong, Pagar Road, Singapore, S.S.

Alex Sunde, Shaw Road, Oratia, Auckland, New Zealand.

Ed. Wirth, 772, McPhillips Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.

To my other Colonial chums who failed to win a prize in this competition I can only wish you all better luck next time.

"Oh crikey!" he ejaculated. "I say, you fellows, that's Hacker! I never noticed him! I say, do you think he heard us talking?"

"Sort of!" grinned Bob.

"Oh crumbs! You fellows are for it, if he did!" gasped Bunter. "I'm jolly glad you never put a bob on for me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! It will be the sack this time! You can't get out of it, if Hacker heard you—I say, ain't you jolly well scared?" exclaimed Bunter.

"Not fearfully! Quelch won't take a lot of notice of Hacker."

"Suppose he goes to the Head?"

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bob. "I wish he would!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Famous Five walked cheerfully on, leaving Billy Bunter puzzled and perplexed, but glad, at all events, that he had had no hand in backing that horse! It was, so far as Bunter could see, the sack for these shady young

sweeps, and he did not want to share that sad fate!

But the Famous Five were not alarmed. They were only wondering whether the Acid Drop—after his experience a couple of days ago—would fall for this!

But doubts were soon resolved. Wingate of the Sixth came out of the House, with a very serious face, and called to them.

"Head's study!" he said briefly.

The Famous Five cut in, and proceeded to the headmaster's study—still quite unalarmed!

THE TWENTY-FIRST CHAPTER.

Enough For Hacker!

DR. LOCKE was looking portentously grave.

Mr. Quelch was looking as if he found it very difficult to repress his annoyance, even in the presence of his majestic Chief!

Mr. Hacker was looking sourly satisfied.

At last—at long last—he was going to prove his case! Quelch had stated, plainly, that he would not hear him again! Very well, then, the headmaster should hear, and Quelch could consider how he liked that! Proof, at last, was in Hacker's hands—out of their own mouths were those shady young rascals condemned! This was the finish.

Into the majestic presence came the Famous Five of the Remove—sedately serious and respectful. They stood in a demure row before the Head.

"Mr. Hacker has made a very startling and very shocking report to me!" said Dr. Locke quietly. "It concerns you five boys."

"Has Mr. Hacker been made master of the Remove, sir?" asked Harry Wharton meekly.

"What? No! What do you mean, Wharton?"

"Oh! If he hasn't, sir, I don't quite understand why he is bothering about us. Mr. Quelch looks after us quite well, sir."

"You must not make such remarks, Wharton!"

"Dr. Locke!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, "I am bound to uphold this boy! Several times of late Mr. Hacker has intervened, unwarrantably, in matters connected with my Form. These boys cannot be blamed for resenting it."

"In such a very serious matter as this, Mr. Quelch—"

"I do not believe for one moment that the matter is serious!" barked Mr. Quelch. "Mr. Hacker has made a series of mistakes—absurd mistakes—I may say, grotesque mistakes! I have no doubt that this is one more."

"Let the boys speak, and let us see if they will dare to deny their own words—to which Bunter can be called as a witness!" said Mr. Hacker bitterly.

"Wharton," said Dr. Locke, "I am informed that you and your friends,

speaking to Bunter in the quadrangle, stated that you had been backing a horse this afternoon."

"Yes, sir!" answered Harry.

"They admitted backing a horse at five to one, and stated that they knew it to be a good horse, as it was owned locally!" amplified Mr. Hacker.

"Nothing, I think, could be clearer."

"Is that correct, Wharton?"

"Perfectly correct, sir."

"Bless my soul! Do you other boys admit it also?"

"Oh, yes, sir!"

Mr. Quelch gazed at those members of his Form, transfixed. He was dumb! Mr. Hacker was not.

"I think, sir, that the matter is clear!" he said. "Mr. Quelch had refused to listen to anything against these boys. Even Mr. Quelch, I think, will now admit that the case is clear—on their own confession!"

"Have we done anything wrong, sir?" asked Harry.

"Wrong!" repeated the Head.

"Yes, sir! If we've done wrong we're sorry, of course; but perhaps you will tell us what there is wrong in helping an old man in a difficulty—"

"What do you mean, Wharton? You admit having backed a horse—"

"Yes, sir! Old Coote's horse."

"Old Coote!" repeated the Head. "Who is old Coote?"

"The village carrier, sir!" said Mr. Quelch, finding his voice. "A very respectable old man, sir, certainly not connected with racing matters."

"Oh, yes! I remember the man!" assented Dr. Locke. "But what has Mr. Coote to do with the matter, Wharton? You cannot mean that he took your bets?"

"Oh crikey!"

"What?"

"I—I mean, no, sir!" gasped Wharton. "We haven't been making any bets, sir! We backed old Coote's horse—"

"He had slipped into the ditch in Friardale Lane, sir!" said Bob, taking up the tale. "Old Coote couldn't get him out—"

"So we helped!" said Nugent. "He had to be backed out, to get him back into the road, sir—so we backed him—"

"All five of us!" said Johnny Bull. "Five to one, sir. We all backed that horse, sir!"

"The backfulness was terrific, sir!"

The Famous Five, speaking in turn, handed over that explanation, with serious faces—though really it was not easy to keep serious.

Dr. Locke listened to it, gazing at them like a man in a dream. Mr. Quelch listened to it with deep relief. Hacker listened to it, with his sharp eyes almost popping out of his bony face. Silence followed.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed the Head, at last. "Is it possible—bless my soul—is it possible that you were—were referring to backing the carrier's horse out of a ditch, when Mr. Hacker heard you—"

"That's all, sir!" said Harry.

"Bless my soul!" repeated the Head. "I—I—I suppose that Mr. Coote will bear out this statement, Wharton, if asked?"

"I am sure of it, sir—the poor old chap was very thankful for the help we gave him. He would still be sticking there if we hadn't backed the horse."

Dr. Locke passed his hand over his mouth. Mr. Quelch did not trouble to conceal a smile! He smiled—broadly!

Hacker did not smile!

"I was assured, sir," said Mr. Quelch, "that this was nothing, but one more of Mr. Hacker's mistakes—his absurd mistakes, his grotesque mistakes!"

"Mr. Hacker—"

The Acid Drop gasped.

"If—if—if this is correct, I have been wilfully misled," he stuttered. "I—I have no doubt—none, sir,—that these boys were aware that I could hear what they said, and they—they—they deliberately—"

Hacker choked.

"Neither have I much doubt on that point," said Mr. Quelch. "Neither do I blame these boys, in the very least, for assisting you, sir, to make an absolutely ridiculous mistake—as you appear to have so strong a desire to make ridiculous mistakes."

"The boys may leave the study!" said the Head hastily.

The boys left the study—and did not chortle till they were outside.

Mr. Hacker left it a few moments later—and had the pleasure, as he went, of hearing a laugh from the study! Mr. Quelch was laughing—even the Head was laughing! And as the unhappy Acid Drop swept down the passage like a thunderstorm, he passed five juniors at the corner, who were laughing, too! He passed them, without a look or a word; his ears burning at the howl of laughter that followed.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Famous Five strolled away to the Rag to tell the story there—amid yells of merriment. It soon spread to all the studies, greeted with general hilarity. It reached Common-room, and when Hacker appeared there, he was greeted with smiling faces by the other beaks. All Greyfriars appeared to enjoy the story of the five juniors who had "backed a horse," all except Hacker!

The Famous Five wondered whether Hacker was fed up at last.

He was!

He was fed-up to the chin, and those young rascals were left to go their own wicked ways without the acid eye of the Acid Drop on them! Fortunately their ways were not fearfully wicked!

THE END.

(Watch out for another screamingly funny yarn of Harry Wharton & Co. in next week's MAGNET. It's entitled "SEXTON BLAKE MINOR!" You'll roar with laughter when you read it!)

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"MOVIES" DON'T DEVELOP INTELLIGENCE!

Your Editor's Reply to "Film Fan"

"Do they use moving pictures in your education at Greyfriars?" asks a reader who signs himself "Film Fan." To this he adds the pointed query, "If not, why not?"

The answer to the first question, broadly speaking, is "No." On one or two rare occasions, special films have been shown to the whole school in Big Hall, and amateurs have now and again projected short home-made films of sporting events in one or other of the Form-rooms. Moving pictures, however, cannot be said to take any part in the system of education followed at Greyfriars.

Why not? Well, frankly, I have found that question rather beyond me, so I have taken it along to Mr. Quelch to obtain his views on it.

Boiled down, here is his answer: At Greyfriars, the idea is to get the fellows, as much as possible, to exercise their own brains and extend themselves a little in acquiring knowledge.

Films, in the opinion of the powers-that-be at Greyfriars hinder that object rather than help it. They demand nothing of the chaps who are watching them except the ability to sit back and take notice, and though this may

be very nice and soothing, it does nothing towards developing intelligence!

Intelligence, in Mr. Quelch's opinion, develops only as a result of active effort. The biggest nitwit in the school could watch moving pictures—including educational films—all day long, without having to put out any active effort. Consequently, says Mr. Quelch, moving pictures have no place in his scheme of things, except possibly as an adjunct to science lessons—and even then in a very limited way.

Well, there you've got it, "Film Fan"! I can only hope it leaves you satisfied.

It certainly doesn't satisfy many of the fellows to whom I have put it!

The views of most Greyfriars men were summed up, I think by Hazeldene, when I asked him what he thought about it.

"If we had films instead of lessons, I'd learn more in a week than I do in a month at present—and enjoy it at the same time!" said Hazel. "This blessed school is twenty years behind the times!"



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AMATEUR ACTORS MAKE ME MAD!

Declares WILLIAM WIBLEY

Why should the aspiring amateur actors of the Remove be such footling, futile, fish-faced fatheads? Again and again this puzzling question forces itself upon me!

Let me tell you what happened this week. It will enable you to understand the sort of thing I have to put up with.

I called a meeting of the Remove Dramatic Society. The chaps all turned up. Looking at them, you would probably have received the impression that they were at any rate not altogether lacking in gumption.

When I made my speech they seemed to display the normal amount of savvy. They clapped my references to last term's successes. They cackled at my wisecracks. They frowned when I spoke of the society's shortage of cash.

But when I got on to the subject of selecting a cast for our new play all these appearances of intelligence vanished. A peculiar gleam came into every eye.

I explained that I needed a slim, handsome, refined-looking hero, and an ugly, repulsive-looking villain, and that I would be grateful for any suggestions after the members of the society had considered the matter.

Something told me that an idea had come to every member and that I should have a regular stream of callers later in the evening.

It had—and I did! My own idea of a slim, handsome, refined-looking hero, I should mention, was Frank Nugent. But I seemed to be the only one who had that idea!

Harold Skinner, who arrived first, thought that the best man for the hero's part would be Harold Skinner. Stott, who came next, thought that the one man in the Form who was obviously cut out for the job was Stott.

Russell, next man in, had a strong fancy for Russell. Vivian called to urge the claims of Vivian, and Squiff to put forward for my best consideration the advantages of choosing Squiff.

But the worst was yet to come! Wun Lung looked in. He said the chapeau who make plenty big hero was Wun Lung, what me tinkee? I told him that what I thought wouldn't bear repeating.

Just to crown it all, Bunter rolled in and said that if I was looking for a slim, handsome, and refined-looking hero, he was obviously the most suitable chap in the Remove to fill the role.

After booting out Bunter, I was still dizzily endeavouring to recover my reason when Frank Nugent arrived.

Thank goodness for the real thing at last, I thought!

Nugent was the man I had already mentally chosen as my slim, handsome, refined-looking hero. There was some sense in the society, after all, if he had come along to offer himself for the part!

"About the play—" Nugent began.

"Ah!" I smiled. "Go on!"

"I've been thinking about your requirements. Of course," said Nugent, "I don't want to speak out of my turn, but if you haven't already chosen your man—"

"I haven't!" I beamed.

"Good! In that case," said Nugent, "I SHOULD LIKE YOU TO CONSIDER ME FOR THE PART OF THE VILLAIN!"

The villain, you know! It was too much for me! With a wild whoop, I lifted a Latin dic, and hurled it at the cheerer chump with all my might.

DICK RUSSELL Explains WHY ANGEL IS KEEN ON ARCHAEOLOGY

Now, you would never have thought of Aubrey Angel of the Fourth being a keen amateur archaeologist would you? Yet he is!

It was in Hall that I heard him ask Mr. Capper's permission to explore the school ruins.

Capper was rather surprised himself. "Taking up archaeology, Angel?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," Angel replied meekly. "It's my favourite hobby, sir—unravelling the secrets of the past."

"Well, well, Angel, I can think of no more commendable hobby," Capper was visibly gratified. "I must say it affords me great satisfaction to know that one of my Form spends his spare time in such a worthy occupation. I am very pleased to grant you the permission you require."

"Thanks awfully, sir," Angel hesitated. "I—I suppose it would be expecting too much to ask for the same facilities for one or two of my friends? I'm trying to get other chaps interested too, you see—forming a kind of little study circle."

"By all means, Angel! Take your friends with pleasure."

Capper ambled off, looking awfully pleased with his promising young pupil.

"Mind if I come, Angel?" I asked, when he had gone. "I'd like to take up this interesting study myself."

Angel, with a crudity rather surprising in a serious young scientist, told me to go and cat coke! But I wasn't put off by that.

Auxious to learn the rudiments of archaeology, I followed him at a respectful distance.

I must say I learned a lot. I found that Paul Kenney and Snop and Stott were also keen archaeologists. All three went along with their leader to inspect the deserted school ruins.

The way they studied archaeology was very instructive. They went to the most secluded part of the ruins and sat down in a circle. Then they lit cigarettes while Angel explored under a big stone and brought to light a leather case containing a pack of playing-cards.

The discovery of this ancient relic naturally pleased the young students.

(Continued at foot of next col.)

RUCTIONS IN REMOVE FORM ROOM!

Trotter on the Warpath

You can't sling bits of chalk about the Remove Form Room during Latin lesson without upsetting our Form-master's temper. In fact, if there's one thing more than any other calculated to arouse the primitive man in Quelch, it is to see odd pieces of chalk flying across the class while he's teaching.

When a bit of chalk hit Skinner on the ear, therefore, right in the middle of an awfully exciting passage from Virgil, nobody was surprised when Quelch looked annoyed.

Quelch rapped out: "Who threw that chalk?"

Nobody answered. After a hawklike look round the class, Quelch allowed the lesson to proceed.

But it had not proceeded further than a couple of medium-sized sentences before the same thing happened again. Kippes caught it this time. By a bit of bad luck, he happened to be yawning and caught it in the mouth; and there was quite a commotion before he managed to eject it into his handkerchief.

Quelch looked his icest when he saw what had happened.

"Some misguided would-be humorist is evidently at work," he grated. "Since it would appear to be useless to ask him to own up, I will warn him that if he repeats the offence I shall make it my business to cause him to regret it—even if it involves punishing innocent boys with him!"

After that portentous

no end. It was quite a revelation to me to see the zest with which they dealt out the cards and started a game. You can imagine yourselves how intriguing it must be to play cards with a pack that has probably not seen the light of day since the Middle Ages, can't you?

I left the young students absolutely engrossed. As I came away, I felt a sense of humble gratitude at having been privileged to get a glimpse into the fascinating realm of Aubrey Angel's archaeology!

speech, the feeling generally was that chalk-chucking in the Remove had probably finished for the morning.

It hadn't! In less than a minute, another chalky missile whizzed across the class, to collide smartly with Johnny Bull's chin. Johnny said: "Oh!" and Quelch said: "Ah!"

Before anyone had time to say anything else, yet another appeared from nowhere, and this time it was really tragic. For who should stop it, but Quelch himself—with the tip of his august nose!

The look on our respected Form-master's face as he glared round the Form after that was really tigerish—and that's putting it at its mildest.

"My warning, it seems, has been unavailing," he said—voice steady and deadly calm. "Only one thing remains. For the offence of the reckless youth who has had the impudence—the unexampled temerity—to strike his own Form-master with a piece of chalk, the whole Form must suffer. The half-holiday which you would normally have taken this afternoon is cancelled!"

A strangled moan went up as the chaps heard their fate. Losing a "halfer" is bad enough in any case; but to lose a "halfer" because of the irresponsible jappings of some unknown idiot was just about the worst thing that had ever happened in history!

Homicidal glares flashed from desk to desk. Who the thump had played this ghastly mockery of a lark? We could have strangled the chap, whoever he was! But who amongst us could have been such a complete ass, anyway?

That question would never have been answered, but for Penfold.

Nobody but Penfold would have thought of looking where Penfold looked. Everybody else took it for granted that the culprit was inside the Form-room.

Penfold was the only chap

who thought of looking outside!

He jumped up suddenly with a yell. He was pointing to one of the upper windows.

"There's the man who's doing it!" he gasped. And, at the same instant, a piece of chalk whizzed through the open window and hit Bolsover's desk!

Quelch rushed to the window. We all stood up. To our blank amazement, we saw Trotter, the school page, perched up in a tree outside the Form-room, calmly preparing to catapult another piece of chalk at us!

"TROTTER!" shrieked

Quelch.

And Trotter, realising suddenly that he was spotted, decided not to catapult that piece of chalk after all!

Within a couple of minutes, Trotter was on the carpet, mumbling incoherent explanations.

It seemed that Bolsover had given the lad a kick in the pants the previous day—and Trotter, in his simple way, had decided to pepper him while he couldn't hit back! But for the unexpected interruption, Trotter would probably have gone on catapulting chalk into the Remove till he found the mark he wanted!

Cheers for Penfold, anyway! Thanks to him, the cancelled "halfer" was restored—with a gracious apology from Quelch thrown in!

All that remains to be added, is that if you can judge by his face after Quelch had finished with him, Trotter is not likely to seek revenge again by catapulting chalk into our Form-room for a long, long time to come!

Quelch.

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